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LIFE OF ROBERT MARQUIS OF SALISBURY

LIFE OF ROBERT MARQUIS OF SALISBURY

BY HIS DAUGHTER

LADY GWENDOLEN CECIL

VOL. II

1868–1880

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CHAPTER I

HATFIELD

THE HOUSE OF LORDS

The year 1868 was a date of new departure in Lord Salisbury's life in other than its political aspects. His inheritance brought with it changes in external conditions whose disabilities, to a man constituted as he was, were more apparent than their advantages. In the first place, it imposed upon him a business for which he had no natural inclination and which at the outset involved a heavy burden of work. He declared afterwards that the year in which he had succeeded to his father's estates had brought him the hardest work which he had ever known—and his standard of comparison was not low. Only those who are professionally connected with the business of land-ownership can realise fully the variety of its complications. Some of them may be visualised dimly from outside, —the intricate uncertainties and irregularities of its income and outgoings, the hamper of its legal safeguards, the competing claims of its innumerable dependent interests. Beyond and modifying these business facts lies a further complexity,—the unwritten tradition, differing in detail upon each estate, in which the human and social elements involved are recognised. It is a tradition of law qualified by equity, of competing and often overlapping rights peaceably preserved through a constant compromise in their

exercise, of a tacit understanding on all sides that no claim should be pressed to its limit. It is singularly reminiscent of the spirit embodied in the constitutional polity of England—a reminder that that polity was first initiated, and was for centuries developed, under the control of the landed gentry. Perhaps that is one reason why members of that class have so often shown a capacity for working the constitution disproportionate to their individual abilities.

The same cause, operating in the opposite direction, must now have been Lord Salisbury's principal dependence in facing his new duties. Political experience prepared him for estate management as other men have been prepared by estate management for political administration. But, technically speaking, his initial ignorance of it must have been almost complete. His father, in whose eyes no life could be compared to that of a country gentleman, whether in its pleasures, its labours or its ambitions, had committed the mistake of trying, in his son's early youth, to force his ideals upon a nature quite different from his own. The young man, whose heirship was then very dubious, had rebelled against the pressure put upon him and had embraced a militant conviction that of all possible existences this was the one for which he was least suited. The business had now, therefore, to be laboriously learnt from the beginning. He successfully acquired a mastery of it, and was able throughout his life to direct the policy of management and to control intelligently the action of agents and subordinates. He was Chairman of Quarter Sessions intermittently for nearly twenty years, and when circumstances compelled him to take up farming on his own account, he became genuinely interested in it on its practical side. But he never achieved his

father's vocational enthusiasm. He could, of necessity, only occupy himself spasmodically with local politics, and to his neighbours and dependants he remained to the end a somewhat remote figure—a distinction to be proud of, but touching them as Englishmen and citizens rather than with the intimate contact of common daily interests.

Yet blood told. Through all his literary and scientific culture there ran a vein as distinct as an outcrop in geological strata. He always knew beforehand what would be the "squire's" view of any proposed legislation and, except where it involved the indolent plea of privilege which never appealed to him, he always sympathised with it. Though he shared not at all in the sporting pleasures of the country and only exotically in its interests, he had an instinctive understanding of the men who lived there,—distrusted, as they did, the teachings of theory; was suspicious, with them, of the claims of book-learnedness even where reason compelled him to accept its conclusions; and, though sometimes critical of their methods of conducting their business, was always ready to spring to arms by their side at the first threat of external interference in its concerns.

One feature in his management of his estate calls for mention for the personal attention which he devoted to it and for his lifelong interest in the subject. As measured by the rapidly rising standard of comfort and his own appreciation of its requirements, he found the mass of his cottage property unsatisfactory. He declined to delegate reform in this matter to agents. He and Lady Salisbury carried out a prolonged inspection and entered gradually upon a campaign of demolition and reconstruction. The greater part of the town of Hatfield itself did not belong to him, and

in time the further ideal was aimed at—though owing to the growing pressure of population it was never attained—of driving insanitary and exorbitantly rented cottages out of existence by a competition of supply. Before his death, he had built more than two hundred cottages in Hatfield parish alone. He always insisted that this subject should stand first among objects of social reform, but was emphatic as to the supreme importance of the economic factor. The system of eleemosynary rents, traditional on most large estates, was pernicious in his view both from the confusion which it introduced into the question of wages, and because, by driving the business-builder out of the field, it left the responsibility of supply wholly on the landlord, who—especially on the terms which he had himself established—was quite unable to meet it. He made it a rule to charge rents in strict proportion to the cost of building, and, as a corollary, was intent upon reducing that cost to the lowest possible figure consistent with the fundamental requirements of health and comfort. In his experimental search for this ideal it cannot be said that the surroundings of Hatfield were beautified—a consideration which its owner always refused to treat as of serious importance. His management of this cottage property was characteristic in another way, in the respect which it displayed for the personal independence of his tenants. He resisted the farmers' constant pressure for tied cottages and kept their letting resolutely in his own hands. He also refused to impose any restrictions on the score of morality. So long as tenants paid their rent and did not overcrowd their houses by subletting or make themselves nuisances to their neighbours, their moral conduct was their own concern or that of their spiritual advisers. It was, he declared, a gross interference

with personal liberty for their landlord to apply indirect coercion in the matter.

The social accompaniments of his new position were more distasteful to him than its unfamiliar business. The externals appertaining to his rank were a source of constant irritation. "Citizen Salisbury" was the nickname which he earned in his family by his growlings whenever he was reminded of its existence. But he could not be laughed out of them, though, in the progress of years, he became more resigned to the inevitable evil. He would maintain that rank without the power of which it was originally the symbol was a sham, and the assumption, therefore, that he could be gratified by its possession an insult to his intelligence, —and it must be remembered in this connection that his peerage, in removing him from the House of Commons, had involved in his case an actual loss of political power.

This was no doubt the main account of his attitude, but does not cover all the ground. Eighteen months after inheriting the title against which he bore such a grudge, he was offered another as completely divorced from power, and was pleased at the offer. Upon Lord Derby's death in 1869 he was elected Chancellor by the University of Oxford. There was a picturesque ceremony when, seated on a great seventeenth-century chair in the Long Gallery at Hatfield, he welcomed the deputation from the University, was invested with the Chancellor's robe, and responded to the congratulatory words addressed to him in an extemporised speech for whose Latinity he received many compliments. He submitted to this and to all the longer ceremonies at Commemoration the following summer without complaint, and, as far as those who knew him could judge, this distinction remained the most valued of all that he enjoyed. Yet, measured by

the same test, it was as much a sham as that which he inherited. The difference must have lain in the association. On the one hand, Oxford with its appeal of age-long churchmanship and loyalty and of who knows what memories of the spiritual stirrings and fine ambitions of youth; and on the other, that social world of the *Court Guide* by which he had once fondly hoped to be ostracised. He never lost the mixture of scorn and moral reprobation with which the fashionable world had inspired him in his uncompromising youth. The only class which he was ever heard to condemn indiscriminately, and therefore, as regarded individuals, sometimes unfairly, was that of "clubland." The very strength of his belief in the vocation of a governing class made him stern in his demand upon the self-discipline and altruism of its members. Any idleness, selfishness or dissipation on their part appeared as the worst kind of treachery to their country.

The hospitalities which wealth imposed were an almost unmitigated affliction to him. The form in which he suffered most under them was in the long pompous dinner-parties of those days, — with their brain-racking strain of small-talk, their bad air and their unwholesome food. On the other hand, the massed political receptions over which his wife presided for so many years were accepted as forming part of the business of life, and though they tired him physically, were felt to be comparatively innocuous in the small demand which they made upon his mental energies. He was always interested in their success and had views of his own as to its conditions. A vivid brilliancy in lighting and a fearless prodigality in invitations were the two prescriptions upon which he insisted. "I am convinced that Englishmen are incapable of conversation until their legs are covered," he reported gravely as the result of his observations.

He was an admirable host on these occasions. The touch of epigram and of finished phrasing which came naturally to him made him peculiarly happy in the brief interchanges of civility which were appropriate, and the courtesy with which he greeted his guests was unfailing,—though rendered a trifle impersonal by his constant incapacity to identify them. It was an incapacity almost without limits. More than once his sons and private secretaries were able to rejoice in having cheated him of a distantly civil welcome. A story which belongs to a later period than that now under consideration was only an extreme example of what was continually happening. One day—it was while the Ministry of 1886–1892 was in power—he was present at a man's breakfast-party. He sat at the right hand of his host, and in the course of the meal asked him in an undertone for the name of the stranger who was seated on his—the host's—left. It was Mr. W. H. Smith, who had been his colleague in office for many years and who was at that moment the second man in his Ministry and in almost daily communication with himself. The only plea which he could urge in excuse of this wonderful blunder was that he always sat opposite to Mr. Smith in Cabinet and had therefore never learnt what his profile looked like.

This defect extended beyond a failure to recognise his friends' faces. Once, when he had been invited to a reception at a royal "mansion" at which all the distinctions of London society were to be present, he was set down, through a coachman's mistake, at a small house in the neighbourhood where a *bal blanc* was opening. A few young ladies in white tulle were the only arrived guests, and a parlour-maid and two or three hired waiters comprised the attendance. But he was twenty minutes in the house before he

discovered that it was not the one to which he had been invited. He assumed the royal hosts to have been detained, and the lady and gentleman by whom he was received to be members of their staff. Their continued non-appearance at last enlightened him,—the incongruity of the surroundings he never recognised at all. Experiments were sometimes made to see how many days or weeks it would take him, unprompted, to discover some fundamental change in a familiar room's furniture or decoration. The experiments usually broke down through the incapacity of those who made them to maintain silence long enough. His shortness of sight, though not acute enough in itself to account for the mistakes which he made, may probably have intensified a natural propensity to fix his attention on mental rather than material objects of vision. Curiously enough, this dulness of observation did not prevent him from being a close observer of manners—particularly of those of women, as to which he was fastidiously particular. After having been in a lady's company he would have no notion as to how she had been dressed, and would probably fail to recognise her face when he next met her. But he would have very definite views as to any lack of delicacy or refinement which her manners had shown, even where it was too slight to rouse criticism in general society. It may be that distinctions of manner—particularly those of the more subtle kind—address themselves really to the moral and intellectual and not to the physical senses.

There were no big functions, however, for the first few years after his succession to his estate. The house in Arlington Street, which had been in the family ownership since the eighteenth century, was dark and insanitary and had impossible offices. It had

to be rebuilt,—a process which, with the preliminary planning, occupied nearly four years. Even had it been available, Lord Salisbury's quarrel with his party would have made political entertaining incongruous. The only hospitalities indulged in at this period were comparatively small house-parties at Hatfield. Lady Salisbury used to say afterwards that this was the only time in her life in which she had a free hand in the selection of her guests. One or two of the leading statesmen of both parties were included, but politicians as a whole were at a discount. Mr. Gladstone came more than once. Though he was now Prime Minister and in the full tide of his political career, his intimate social relations were still with churchmen and scholars, and at Hatfield he found company congenial to his tastes. Bishop Wilberforce, Lady Salisbury's oldest friend in the ecclesiastical world; Dr. Liddon, then at the beginning of what was to become a close and lifelong intimacy; Mr. Froude, burrowing among the Cecil papers for new historical lights; Dean Stanley, championing ardently every picturesque legend about Queen Elizabeth which he could collect; Mr. George Richmond, another old friend, artist and churchman, now engaged upon portraits of his host and hostess. In the correspondence that has been preserved other names appear: some reminiscent of journalistic comradeship,—Mr. John Murray the publisher, and Dr. Smith the editor of the *Quarterly*,—Mr. Delane, Mr. George Venables, Mr. Herman Merivale; others with a more pronounced literary flavour,—Sir Arthur Helps, the authors of *Tom Brown* and of *Alice in Wonderland*, Matthew Arnold on one occasion, and, a few years later, Robert Browning.

Of this society it is Lady Salisbury who must be looked upon as having been the centre, receiving and imparting mental stimulus and enjoyment in

full measure. Her husband was seldom more than an auxiliary and rather detached figure in any social gathering,—not to be ignored, always impressive of personality and of a decisive distinction in thought and speech, — sporadically interested or amused by the talk around him,—but never surrendering himself to his company or finding in the response of other minds more than an occasional compensation for his abiding consciousness of effort and restraint. To those who knew what he was able for, there could not but be a feeling of possibilities wasted. For his conversational gifts, when displayed at their best, were of a high order. His talk fulfilled the primary condition of conversation in being responsive, never arrested upon a single topic or absorbed in one point of view. He was not loquacious, and there was always a risk of his being reduced to silence by others more talkative than himself,—a result which would also inevitably follow if he was met by any unreal pretence of interest. But, provided that the interest was genuine, it mattered little what the topic was that roused it. Personal gossip or high politics, the last novel, a problem of history or theology,—he would pass from one to the other without any suggestion of preference. His reading had covered a wide extent of subjects, but the process of mental digestion was so active in him that the thoughts or conclusions suggested by it were seldom those that the author would have invited. What he had read came forth, therefore, freshly stamped with his own personality, and having no flavour of information deliberately gathered or consciously imparted.

But in the memory of those who enjoyed it, the substance of his talk will be almost obscured by the brilliancy of its clothing. He hardly ever told a good story ; a finished epigram or a word-play that could

bear repetition was of rare occurrence. But the gleam of wit was incessant. Even in discussions upon the most serious subjects an unexpected turn of ironic phrase,—an allusive metaphor,—a passing thrust at some object of popular worship,—an epithet whose audacity conveyed a volume of unexpressed criticism,—followed each other rapidly, claiming neither notice nor reply, past as soon as uttered. The effect was stimulating,—could at times have been criticised as exhaustingly so. Attention had to be constantly on the stretch if one was not to miss some intimated allusion or half-touched suggestion. He was not fond of argument and I do not think he argued well. His professional habits were too strong upon him; he was too keen to win, too prone to the methods of debate. Sometimes, where his real interest in the subject was sufficiently strong, he could pass from discussion to argument without ceasing to seek seriously for added light upon the point at issue. But not often. There were times, indeed, when he became possessed by a spirit of sheer mischief and contradiction,—refusing to see his opponent's points and bewildering him with a word-play which, though unanswerable, was unconvincing and not intended to convince. In discussion which was not argument none of this was so. Then he would seize a point almost before it was expressed, and it was seldom that the subject closed without larger issues or deeper foundations coming into view than those whose existence had been realised at the outset.

But all this was fully true only when his talk was at its best, and that could only be when he felt completely at his ease. One characteristic in particular made this condition imperative. He claimed a large freedom in expression. No one, when he chose, could speak to the purpose more clearly and

accurately. But the gift was reserved for his business communications. In social conversation he scarcely ever gave literal expression to his sentiments or opinions. Any attempt to apply such an interpretation to his language, the mere suspicion that some one was present who might so apply it, acted as an immediate check on his spontaneity. He must be conscious that his company was possessed of the key to his cipher and that misunderstanding was impossible. Intimacy thus became an essential condition for any real enjoyment of social intercourse, and intimacy was with him a plant of slow growth and restricted cultivation.

At the time of his marriage he had told his father that he was not aware of enjoying any pleasure whose indulgence depended on wealth, and opportunity did not falsify this self-analysis. But the scope of one pleasure,—that of scientific experiment,—was certainly enlarged by his acquisition of fortune. One of his first acts on coming to Hatfield was to prepare a laboratory and, with the assistance of a friend, Mr. Herbert McLeod,[1] for years his faithful counsellor and referee in all scientific work, to instal therein various electrical apparatus. He spent all the leisure that he could achieve on prolonged and minute experiments,—at first upon problems of polarisation and magnetism, and later on upon certain spectroscopic phenomena. He published a paper on these in the *Philosophical Magazine*, and in a German handbook on the subject they are mentioned as the first in point of time in which the conclusion was drawn that a gas of low temperature could emit a bright spectrum. An account of him at this time, written after his death by Mr. McLeod for the Royal Society, shows him repeating, checking, analysing, with as much patience

[1] For many years Professor of Chemistry at Cooper's Hill College.

and enthusiasm as if such work had been the occupation of his life.

The sorting and rearrangement of his library filled interstices of time. Dr. Brewer, the historian of Henry VIII.,—an enthusiast in his vocation to whom the sixteenth century was a more living reality than the nineteenth,—was invited to investigate the manuscripts. There were exciting discoveries,—one of the Casket letters imputed to Mary Queen of Scots, not hitherto recognised,—a packing-case stored with historical documents hidden away in an attic. An assistant both to Lord Salisbury in the library and to Dr. Brewer among the manuscripts was Mr. Robert Guntan, who soon learnt to emulate the latter in antiquarian zeal and in his mastery of mediaeval documents. He had then just been appointed as Lord Salisbury's secretary, and was to serve him without break for the thirty-five years that followed. His abilities were many-sided and he had a large and singularly selfless outlook upon life. His long connection, reinforced by these qualities, gave him a unique position,—the one man whose help Lord Salisbury was always willing to accept.

The library was examined, sifted, weeded,—and grew, nevertheless, like a living organism. Occasional finds were contributed from the second-hand book-stalls, before which — occasionally in London, but especially during his frequent visits to Paris—Lord Salisbury would spend spare hours in brooding search. Everybody had their gin-shops, he used to say, and his were book-stalls and stores of scientific instruments. The search was particularly directed to any publication bearing upon the French Revolution, which subject had a peculiar fascination for him. A collection of contemporary pamphlets and newspapers as well as of historical works upon it filled one column of his library.

But the increase of books consisted mainly of new works required to satisfy his own and his wife's intellectual curiosity. It would not be accurate to describe him as a lover of literature in and for itself. He took delight in good writing and was unhesitating in his preference for one style over another,—considering them with the critical appreciation of a practiser of the craft. But he read books more for their matter than their manner and confessed himself bored with a bit of merely "pretty writing." His serious reading consisted mainly of theology and history. In the latter subject he must have read nearly every work of note that appeared,—rich as that generation was in historical output. The class of history that attracted him most was pure narrative, or even a simple condensation of original documents. He resented works built up round a theory or in which large space was devoted to a philosophic analysis of the events recorded: "I want to know what happened—not what the man thinks." His inability to be passively receptive made him happiest with a bare statement of fact, from which, imaginatively reconstructing the sequences of cause and effect, he could evolve his own theories or draw his own conclusions.

He read a great many novels. He was one of the great company of men of note who have worshipped at the shrine of Miss Austen, and must have known her six precious volumes almost by heart. He could never decide between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* for his favourite. That he should have been fond of Scott and actively repelled by Thackeray was an interesting comment upon his reputation for cynical pessimism. In modern fiction, both French and English, what he mainly asked for was a good story or a witty presentment of men and manners—pro-

vided that the wit was good-natured. He forswore the whole school of realists from Balzac downwards. No display of talent could make him tolerate a book that " left a nasty taste " behind it or dealt in sordid or painful analysis. In poetry his reading was largely restricted to the discoveries of his youth—though it was after he had become Prime Minister that he read Shelley for the first time and was pleasantly surprised at his own capacity for appreciation. Goethe's *Faust* was a great favourite, and — perhaps more traditionally than actually — Byron. Tennyson he found too " sugary,"—Pope was admired primarily for the epigram and finish which would have been as exquisite in prose. But his intimate authors belonged to the older classics. A number of tiny volumes stood on one of the shelves in his private room : Shakespeare (the only Englishman), Virgil, Horace, Euripides,—perhaps another Greek, and Tacitus. Two or three of these volumes accompanied him on every holiday, and one of them would infallibly appear from his pocket on a railway journey or picnic party or to fill up any spare interval of waiting.

Conscious of his aesthetic deficiencies, he made no attempt to interfere in the furnishing or ornamentation of the house and its surroundings. That, with all management within and without doors,—including that of the stables,—was left entirely in his wife's hands. He reserved to himself only the arrangement of his own rooms, and it can at least be claimed that the result was not commonplace. They were saved from aggressive ugliness by their lack of pretension towards any standard of appearance whatever,—as far removed from the philistinism of Tottenham Court Road as they were from all other aesthetic ideals. You felt when you entered them that you were in a world where the existence of outward form

was unrecognised. The furniture was selected and arranged with an entire disregard to shape or character. Beautiful pieces left there by his ancestors were placed side by side with the crudest fittings of a modern office, or with ingenious devices of his own carried out with a fine simplicity by the house carpenter; and, except for these last, hardly any of the articles present were being used for the purpose for which they had been originally designed. Utility and convenience were the ideals aimed at, and themselves were apprehended after an entirely unconventional fashion. One arrangement of utility was effective, though occasionally productive of inconvenience to the household. Both at Hatfield and in his London house his working room was supplied with double doors placed sufficiently far apart from one another to make any knocking or rattling at the outer one inaudible from within when the inner one was closed. By locking the outer door he could thus ensure himself absolutely against any possibility of disturbance,—a point on which he was morbidly sensitive whenever he was engaged upon any serious mental effort. This dread of interruption induced in him also the habit of working late at night,—retrieving the lost hours of rest by sleep during the day. He was a great sleeper,—finding eight hours in the twenty-four necessary and being happier if he could get nine.

The same temperament which made isolation on occasions imperative made privacy at all times a desirable luxury, and it was probably in the opportunities offered of securing it that he received the most positive benefit from his change of circumstances. In one matter notably. The publicity, as well as the discomfort, of life in hotels or lodgings had of late years a good deal qualified the enjoyment of the annual holiday at the seaside both to Lord Salisbury

and his wife. To be able to spend it in a house of their own had been a dream hitherto unattainable but which could now materialise. A search for a suitable site began at once. Some place on the English coast was at first thought of, but the idea was soon abandoned. Both were happier abroad. The sense of irresponsibility and freedom from convention appealed to Lady Salisbury; the greater possibility of seclusion to her husband. England,—especially since proprietorship was aimed at,—would mean neighbourly and parochial obligations and inevitable participation in local affairs. A site was chosen near the edge of a high cliff overlooking the little valley of Puys, about two miles east of Dieppe. It was a part of the coast already familiar to both husband and wife,—their engagement had taken place at Dieppe. A house was built which remained their holiday home for nearly twenty-five years, and they never regretted having fixed it in a foreign country. The greater simplicity of manners in France, the indifference to appearances where any practical purpose was to be served, made life easy; the national difference of outlook supplied in itself a refreshment of change. Above all, Lord Salisbury cherished the social convention under which the wish for privacy was frankly recognised and respected. If an English lady does not wish to receive her acquaintance, her servants have to gloss the fact with a conventional lie,—their compeers in France may say frankly and without offence that their mistress "is not to be seen." When, after the Berlin Congress, Lord Salisbury had become a personage in European politics, it was feared that on his next holiday his privacy might suffer. The opposite effect followed. An acquaintance had by then been formed with one or two French families. That year the ladies called but

the gentlemen did not. Their wives remarked, assuming acquiescence as a matter of course, that to trouble M. le Marquis with visits, after his recent labours, would be of the greatest indiscretion.

The strain of work which was associated in Lord Salisbury's memory with his first year or two at Hatfield was not the outcome only of private business. In the winter of 1867–68, finding himself insufficiently occupied, he had consented to take the temporary chairmanship of the Great Eastern Railway, which was in acute financial difficulties at the time. He retained the post for four years until the crisis was passed and the Company was again in a sound position, —the directors parting from him in the spring of '72 with many expressions of gratitude. The undertaking proved onerous, and his correspondence shows a constant consultation not only upon larger issues of policy but upon all the details of railway management. One episode is worth noting, where he attempted an initiative outside the range of his immediate duties. A rate-cutting war, in which the Great Eastern was indirectly interested, had broken out between several of the other great companies. Lord Salisbury wrote to suggest to the respective chairmen that they should meet in private conference to discuss a means of referring the original cause of quarrel to arbitration, and thus arrest the loss to railway property—estimated at the rate of £200,000 a year—which was being incurred. The chairman of one of the two lines principally concerned refused even to consider the possibility of its cause being submitted to arbitration. In vain did Lord Salisbury point to the future and urge that, since compromise of some sort was inevitable, it must be wiser to face the fact before instead of after the sacrifice of so much money. The merits of the immediate issue as individually

apprehended, the refusal to abandon the immediate claim, carried it. It was an incident suggestive of the perennial opposition between the political and the business points of view.

These various occupations and interests did not interfere with Lord Salisbury's political activities within the limited field to which they were now restricted. He took his seat in the House of Lords below the gangway on the Government side, and even during the last half of the '68 session showed no disposition towards either of the courses to which party rebels are normally tempted. He neither withdrew from the fight, nor did he court appreciation from the party opposite. He joined freely in debate and always strongly on the Tory side.

In the general election of that autumn the Conservatives were heavily defeated and Mr. Gladstone was returned to power with a large majority. The cynical jubilations of '67 were silenced and Lord Salisbury's position in the party was no doubt correspondingly strengthened. But the apparently entire revolution which took place in it within the next few years makes it difficult to believe that the House of Commons' repudiation of his revolt had ever been really representative of the party at large. Some sign of distrust, however rapidly overcome, must otherwise have shown itself. But the distrust,—limited to one personality,—remained all on his side. What happened with regard to the Lords' leadership was expressive of the situation. After Lord Derby's withdrawal in the spring of '68, Lord Malmesbury, as occupying the post of highest official rank at the moment, took the lead automatically until the party went into opposition. Then Lord Cairns accepted it on the understanding that it was to be only for one

session. In October 1869 the death of Lord Derby put an end to any surviving expectation of his return and emphasised the necessity for a permanent arrangement. His son,—the Lord Stanley of the previous Conservative Ministry,—and Lord Salisbury were the immediately recognised alternatives. The former refused on account of the burden of private business which had fallen upon him,—the latter replied that he could not under any circumstances enter into even quasi-official relations with Mr. Disraeli. Eventually the Duke of Richmond, a man generally trusted but admittedly in the second rank of politicians, agreed to come forward ;—the new Lord Derby and Lord Salisbury, according to precedent in such circumstances, proposing and seconding him for election. At his request Lord Salisbury signalised a further support by moving across the gangway and taking his seat on the front Opposition bench. His relations with the ex-colleagues who occupied it were entirely friendly from the first,—particularly with the Duke himself, with whom he seems to have been in constant consultation. Though he acted independently of them on occasions, it was scarcely more so than would be thought generally permissible for colleagues in opposition. But he still remained resolutely outside the central counsels of the party leaders. This position became inevitably anomalous in the rapid advance which he made in reputation and authority during the years that followed. It is apparent from the records of debate that before the Gladstone Ministry was three years old he was not only prominent among his equals but had become the dominating figure on the Conservative side in the House of Lords. His name appears on the pages of Hansard as constantly as that of the Duke of Richmond himself—far more frequently than that of any other Conservative leader.

The ministerial chiefs concentrated their attention upon him in debate,—controverting his arguments, appealing against his policy, deprecating his ultimate resistance in language ordinarily used only towards the leader of the opposing party. When he was co-operating with his front bench,—which was the case in the large majority of instances,—he either had charge himself of their most important motion or he occupied the hardly less authoritative position of speaking to the division upon it.

He certainly owed nothing of this position to any diplomatic courting of public favour in his speeches. The characteristic which in after years of greater responsibility found rarer expression in what his opponents stigmatised as "blazing indiscretions" was very prominent at this time. It could best perhaps be defined as one of provocative candour. Though his judgement as to what tactical prudence required did not always agree with that of his friends, he determined his actions by its guidance. But in speech he was constantly inclined to rebel against its restraints. If his audience had embraced a principle which he held to be false, he was not content to try and link it up by ingenious argument with the practical conclusion which he wished them to accept. The principle itself must be attacked—at times as it appeared almost gratuitously—and his case must be based upon arguments in which he himself believed. A salient instance was on the University Tests Bill in 1871. He had charge of an amendment which had been carefully devised to safeguard undergraduates from irreligious teaching without incurring the odium of imposing a direct test on the consciences of their teachers. But in defending it he disdained the shelter provided,—argued throughout the positive duty of imposing tests in such circumstances, and dilated

fervently upon the iniquity of exposing immature youths to the risk of a propaganda of unbelief out of respect for the scruples or sensibilities of their tutors. This candour was not reserved only for opponents. In 1869 a Bill was introduced for entrusting the Endowed Schools Commission with large powers for modifying the trust deeds of charitable bequests. It was generally approved of, and there was one clause, enabling the Commission to divert money bequeathed for "doles" to purposes of education, which was commended as warmly by the pundits of enlightened philanthropy as by those of culture. Lord Salisbury introduced his protest against it with the startling exordium: "I have long ago formed the opinion that though there are many disreputable things in this Bill there is only one thoroughly wicked clause, and that is the present one." He then proceeded to denounce the hypocrisy, in that House of inherited wealth, of preparing to deprive the poor of the funds bequeathed to them on the plea that it was bad for them to receive money without working for it.[1] It would be difficult to conceive of an utterance more skilfully devised, in its combination of conclusion and argument, to shock susceptibilities in all quarters of the House simultaneously.

Though in somewhat less drastic forms, this characteristic was of frequent reappearance. It must have alienated support in individual instances, but probably did him no damage in outside opinion. To the man in the street, whether he agrees or not on the specific issue, there is refreshment in the sight of a politician who lets himself appear as he is and not as the fashion of the day prescribes.

Lord Salisbury's contributions to debate on the merits of the various "heroic measures" introduced

[1] Hansard, July 15, 1869.

by Mr. Gladstone's Ministry were, as a rule, closely representative of normal Conservative opinion in the country and call for no special mention. His attitude upon the constitutional position of the House of Lords has, however, a special character and interest. The question was a burning one, since disputes between the two Houses were of constant recurrence in that Parliament. He was called upon to define his views upon the subject, in connection with the Irish Church controversy, almost immediately after his succession to the peerage. That summer, the Liberal majority in the House of Commons—still in opposition—followed the adoption of the Irish Church Resolutions by passing a Bill suspending all appointments to benefices in Ireland in preparation for the measure of Disestablishment which they had undertaken to introduce in the next Parliament. It was a measure which could not pretend to have received as yet any shadow of support from the electorate. The Lords rejected it and Lord Salisbury spoke in support of their action. When the " firm, deliberate, sustained " conviction of their countrymen was in favour of any course, he said, he did not for a moment deny that it was their duty to yield, however unpleasant the process might be. But there was an enormous step between that and becoming the mere echo of the House of Commons.

" I am quite sure—whatever judgement may be passed on us, whatever predictions may be made, be your term of existence long or short—you will never consent to act except as a free, independent House of the Legislature, and that you will consider any more timid or subservient course as at once unworthy of your traditions, unworthy of your honour, and, most of all, unworthy of the nation you serve." (*Hansard, July 1868.*)

The elections which took place the same autumn were fought upon this issue,—the procedure by which the Liberal party had pledged itself beforehand in the adoption of Mr. Gladstone's Resolutions presenting it to the judgement of the constituencies in an unusually definite form. When the Disestablishment Bill came up to the Lords, therefore, Lord Salisbury advised against its rejection in a speech that was carefully complementary to the one of the previous year :

" It has been represented that, in admitting it to be the duty of this House to sustain the deliberate, the sustained, the well-ascertained opinion of the nation, we thereby express our subordination to the House of Commons, and make ourselves merely an echo of the decisions of that House. In my belief, no conclusion could be more inconsequential. If we do merely echo the House of Commons, the sooner we disappear the better. The object of the existence of a second House of Parliament is to supply the omissions and correct the defects which occur in the proceedings of the first. But it is perfectly true that there may be occasions in our history in which the decision of the House of Commons and the decision of the nation must be taken as practically the same. . . .

" It may be that the House of Commons in determining the opinion of the nation is wrong, and if there are grounds for entertaining that belief, it is always open to this House, and indeed it is the duty of this House, to insist that the nation shall be consulted, and that one House, without the support of the nation, shall not be allowed to domineer over the other. In each case it is a matter of feeling and of judgement. We must decide by all we see around us and by events that are passing. We must decide, each for himself, upon our consciences and to the best of our judgement, in the exercise of that tremendous responsibility which at such a time each Member of this House bears, whether the House of Commons

does or does not represent the full, the deliberate, the sustained convictions of the body of the nation. But when once we have come to the conclusion from all the circumstances of the case that the House of Commons is at one with the nation, it appears to me that—save in some very exceptional cases, save in the highest cases of morality, in those cases in which a man ought not to set his hand to a certain proposition though a revolution should follow from his refusal—it appears to me that the vocation of this House has passed away, and that it must devolve the responsibility upon the nation, and may fairly accept the conclusion at which the nation has arrived." (*Hansard, June 17, 1869.*)

His efforts to enforce the complementary alternative of action which is assumed in this statement of principle met with small success. The next year upon the Irish Land Bill and the year after upon the University Tests Bill he tried, ineffectually, to induce the House to insist upon amendments which the Commons had rejected,—dividing in a minority on each occasion. "I feel convinced," he wrote to Lord Carnarvon, on the Land-Bill issue, "that if we make any substantial retreat from the very moderate position that we have taken up, our future position in the Constitution will be purely decorative."[1] In 1872, when the question of fighting the Ballot Bill was under discussion, he wrote to the same correspondent, again laying down in more precise form the principle that he had enunciated three years earlier.

To Lord Carnarvon, February 20, 1872.

"I do not think the Ballot will come on for second reading in our House before Easter. I am strongly for rejecting the Bill on the second reading, for this reason. It appears to me of vital necessity that our

[1] To Lord Carnarvon, June 20, 1870.

acceptance of Bills to which we are opposed should be regulated on some principle. If we listen to the Liberals we should accept all important Bills which had passed the House of Commons by a large majority. But that in effect would be to efface the House of Lords. Another principle,—which is, so far as I can gather, what commends itself to Derby—is to watch newspapers, public meetings and so forth, and only to reject when 'public opinion,' thus ascertained, growls very loud. This plan gives a premium to bluster and will bring the House into contempt. The plan which I prefer is frankly to acknowledge that the nation is our Master, though the House of Commons is not, and to yield our own opinion only when the judgement of the nation has been challenged at the polls and decidedly expressed. This doctrine, it seems to me, has the advantage of being: (1) Theoretically sound. (2) Popular. (3) Safe against agitation, and (4) so rarely applicable as practically to place little fetter upon our independence. It is therefore rather as part of a general principle than because I attach a supreme importance to the question of the Ballot, that I am most earnestly desirous of inducing Richmond to resist the second reading. He confessed to me the other night that Dizzy was pressing him hard the other way."

The contention that this measure had not been before the country at the last general election derived especial force from the fact that in the last Parliament Mr. Gladstone himself had voted against it. On the other hand, reports from bye-elections affirmed its actual popularity and no doubt determined the counsels of the Commons leader. They prevailed, and when Lord Grey challenged the second reading of the Bill the Conservative front bench abstained from the division, Lord Salisbury speaking and voting with the minority of resistance. His speech did not show any keen interest in the question on its merits,

but he spoke strongly as to the indirect issue involved. "If it be true that the House of Lords is a mere copying-machine for the decrees of the House of Commons, the sooner its duties are remitted to that useful instrument the better." [1]

These successive defeats were a source of recurrent depression and Lord Salisbury would return from each division convinced anew of his isolated impotence. Yet it was probably these incidents that operated most directly in extending his reputation beyond the walls of Parliament. They brought his name prominently before the public as identified with a policy of uncompromising resistance, and must have been an immediate passport to the favour of those numerous groups whose exasperation with the disturbing activities of the Liberal Government was a main element in the reaction that was rising against it. Party leaders and managers shook their heads over his unwisdom, but the fact remains that though he took no steps to gain popularity out of doors, though he never opened his lips outside the House of Lords throughout the whole of this period, his inclusion in the Conservative Ministry was called for at its close in a chorus of demand that was roused for no other member of the party except its chief. The force of his personality and his powers of speech might explain the growth of his influence in the House, but a similar phenomenon in the country is hard to account for except by the reputation acquired through some such distinctive action.

Though these failures to persuade the House of Lords to an attitude of self-assertion depressed him they could hardly have taken him by surprise. From his first entry into the House he had been painfully impressed by the apathetic indifference of its members

[1] Hansard, June 10, 1872.

and by the consciousness of weakness which he believed to be its cause. In the spring of 1869 he supported a proposal for a slight modification in its constitution by arguments which showed him prepared for more drastic change.

The occasion was a Bill introduced by Lord Russell with the object of providing life peerages for distinguished men who were too poor to be willing to burden their heirs with titles. The total number was to be limited to twenty-eight and only four might be nominated in a single year. The choice was to be limited to certain categories, elaborately defined. Lord Salisbury spoke in support of the Bill on its first reading, but insisted that the question should be considered as it affected the efficiency of the House and not the interests of individuals, however distinguished. He urged that the categories should be done away with altogether or largely extended. The measure was desirable for quite other reasons than those which its author had urged.

"We belong too much to one class, and the consequence is that with respect to a large number of questions we are all too much of one mind. Now, that is a fact which appears to me to be injurious to the character of the House as a political assembly in two ways. The House of Lords, though not an elective, is strictly a representative assembly, and it does, in point of fact, represent very large classes in the country. But if you wish this representation to be effective, you must take care that it is sufficiently wide, and it is undoubtedly true that, for one reason or another, those classes whose wealth and power depend on commerce and mercantile industry do not find their representation in this House so large or so adequate as do those whose wealth and power depend upon the agricultural interest and landed property. . . . We want, if possible, more repre-

sentatives of diverse views and more antagonism. On certain subjects, it is true, we have antagonism enough—on Church subjects, for instance, and on the interesting question as to who should occupy the benches opposite. But there are a vast number of social questions deeply interesting to the people of this country, especially questions having reference to the health and moral condition of the people—and on which many members of your Lordships' House are capable of throwing great light, and yet these subjects are not closely investigated here because the fighting power is wanting and the debates cannot be sustained." (*Hansard, April 9, 1869.*)

Further, it was only by ensuring that its essentially representative character was plainly expressed in its constitution that the privileges of the House could be permanently preserved.

" The future of the House of Lords is one of great hope as regards its stability, and the wisdom of your Lordships at this particular crisis of time in dealing with its constitution will decide how far the power of this House shall remain intact, or how far it shall sink before the advancing power of the House of Commons."

The double character imparted to the Bill by this advocacy at the outset gave it a somewhat abnormal history. Up to the time of its second reading the objects proclaimed by Lord Russell dominated the debate and were generally approved of—though the Conservative leaders pointed out that the number of nominations prepared for would be largely in excess of such a narrowly conditioned demand. But gradually its possible constitutional developments came to be dwelt upon and alarm showed itself during the Committee stage, though not to the point of actual opposition. Lord Salisbury's interpositions were not

calculated to reassure the doubters. He was twitted with having suggested that a representative character could be imparted to the House by the addition of twenty-eight members. He replied that he preferred reforms which grew slowly from small beginnings—"All change to be wholesome must be gradual." [1] He repudiated any wish to destroy the predominantly hereditary character of the House, but hoped that such a change as was now proposed "would, in some degree, render it less sensitive to changes of another character," [2] and that a greater elasticity in its composition would add to its strength and permanence. On the report stage he defined the prospect more precisely:

"I believe that the effect of this Bill will be small and I like it the better for that. I do not like a policy which produces a transformation scene once every two or three years. The evil which I believe exists, which this Bill will tend in a very small degree to remedy, and which other measures will also tend to remedy, is simply this . . . that what we call the hereditary principle is not so strong in its influence over mankind as it was in former times, and that the process by which that change of feeling has been produced is still in operation and that we do not know what will be its limits. . . . Believing that a legislative assembly, whether first or second, should be thoroughly powerful and efficient for its object, it seems to me desirable, as far as we can, to seek new sources of power from which to make up to this House that source of power which to some extent has declined." (*Hansard, June 8, 1869.*)

Radicals outside the House scornfully announced their purpose of exacting a far more extreme measure of change, and alarm among the peers became para-

[1] Hansard, June 3, 1869. [2] *Idem.*

mount. The Conservative leaders went suddenly into Opposition and the Bill, which had passed through all its earlier stages without a division, was defeated on the third reading by a substantial majority,—Lord Salisbury voting with the minority in its favour.

The arguments upon which he dwelt in these debates show that from the time of his first entry into the House of Lords he anticipated fundamental change as a probable necessity if its power was to be preserved; that this anticipation in no way distressed him; and that the vital need for a strong and independent Second Chamber obscured all lesser issues in his eyes. It was this measurement of values that inspired such defiant utterances as have been quoted and as were often to be renewed. They were the outcome of no reckless bravado but simply the expression of a deliberate and long-established conviction. He valued the continuance of the House as a Second Chamber only in so far as it remained strong and independent: to be willing to risk its extinction as an alternative to its subservience was only stating the same view in other words. Various circumstances, among which the most prominent were Mr. Gladstone's failure to interpret public opinion correctly and his own capacity for taking advantage of the fact for the strengthening of the Lords' authority, deprived the question during his lifetime of actuality. But his attitude towards it never changed.

CHAPTER II

FRANCE AND IRELAND

RETURN TO OFFICE

During these years in Opposition Lord Salisbury continued to write for the *Quarterly Review*,—though not so regularly as he had done before 1867. The articles appear, in fact, to have been undertaken as an occupation for the holidays, since, with one exception, they are all to be found in the October numbers of the *Review*. Three out of a total of six are devoted to the tragic happenings in France—the Franco-Prussian War, the Paris Commune, and the political lessons to be learnt from those catastrophes. At the outset of the war the feeling in England, as a whole, was in favour of Germany,—until shocked into condemnation by the horrors of the siege of Paris and the severity of the terms exacted from the defeated country. But Lord Salisbury was a partisan on the side of France from the first. There was an intimacy to start with, both actual and intellectual. Diplomatically, he was destined to be often in opposition to her; politically, his essentially British temperament distrusted her faith in impractical logic, while her later policy towards religion was necessarily repellent to him. But with her culture and her civilisation his sympathies were very close. He loved her language,—her literature was almost, if not quite, as familiar to him as that of his own country.

He used to declare that clear thinking in the world would be greatly benefited if it could be forbidden to publish any metaphysical philosophy except in French: a Frenchman *could* not write obscurely however hard he might try,—just as mistiness was inseparable from the "intolerable" German language. The clarity, the subtlety, the perfect finish of the French mentality attracted him; the quickness of its apprehension,—the audacity of its humour,—the fineness of its wit, were a constant satisfaction. But on this issue his attitude was not determined only by his personal sympathies. The intense indignation stirred in him at the time of Germany's attack on Schleswig-Holstein had not been forgotten; it had directed his attention to the further developments of Prussian policy; and he was wholly sceptical of the view, sedulously cultivated by Count Bismarck's skilful diplomacy, and generally accepted at that time in England, that France was the real aggressor in this war. In the autumn of 1870, while the German troops were concentrating round Paris, the Prussian statesman issued circular letters to the neutral Courts in which he adduced this charge against the French as an explanation and defence of his now proclaimed intention of demanding the cession of Alsace and Lorraine. Lord Salisbury, in an article on the "Terms of Peace," disputed the accusation and protested earnestly against the proposed annexation, calling upon his own Government to intervene and prevent such a peril to the future peace of Europe.

"There are calamities which transcend all ordinary rules, and to the authors of them we are bound to speak; to give advice, if it will be received,—if not, at least to pronounce a judgement and record a protest. Rebuffs suffered in such a cause would not be dishonourable; they would at least save us from any

moral complicity with acts which we abhor, and from the danger of being estopped by a seeming acquiescence at this time from the chances of action which future contingencies might offer. . . .

" At the head of six hundred thousand men, under the walls of beleaguered Paris, Count Bismarck has the courage to pretend that peaceful, idyllic Germany needs to be protected against her formidable and turbulent neighbour. The allegiance of a couple of millions who detest her is the safeguard which her feebleness requires against the overwhelming power of France. Europe will not share the Chancellor's apprehensions. Other nations will be disposed to think that there is more to fear from the intoxication of German triumph, than from distracted and revolutionised France. ' Pacific Germany ' is a mere diplomatic commonplace. There is nothing in history to justify such a pretension." (*Quarterly Review, October 1870.*)

He emphasises this statement by references to Prussia's historical record, and then turns to the evils which must follow from the threatened act of spoliation both for Germany herself and for the future peace of Europe. A resentment would be aroused whose endurance could not be estimated by any comparison with the events of past history. " The spread of education and the increased freedom of discussion have almost destroyed the healing power of time."

" If Europe were sufficiently united to force the belligerents into reasonable terms, its best interests would be served by absolutely prohibiting any change of frontiers. The first object of a treaty of peace should be to make future war improbable. Some of the conditions that have been mentioned would certainly have that effect. Any provision that tended towards disarmament would be salutary in the highest degree. The razing of fortresses, and the sacrifice of

ships, the infliction of an indemnity which will add materially to the national debt of France, will all be effective securities for peace. . . . There will be nothing to ear-mark the taxation caused by the indemnity, or by the destruction of war material : it will be to the taxpayer's eyes indistinguishable from all the other burdens he has to bear. Such motives for peace would be powerful, because they would be unmixed. They would appeal with the most cogent arguments to self-interest : they would provoke no bitter feelings of mortification and resentment which self-interest would be powerless to neutralise. On the other hand, a ceded territory would be a constant memorial of humiliation."

Unless the spirit of the nation were irretrievably broken, France would assuredly suffer no fear of sacrifice or temptation of prosperity to shake her purpose of effacing this shame.

" Count Bismarck does not affect to deny that his proposed annexations will arouse the undying resentment of the French. He cynically accepts and exaggerates the idea. He replies that, in any case, he believes the French will take the first opportunity of trying over again the conclusions of this campaign, whatever the terms of peace may be ; and that this vindictiveness on their part will be so certain and so keen, that no annexation of territory can make it seriously worse. In any case, be the leniency of Germany what it may, he counts on another and an early war ; and he avers that his one object in demanding a cession of territory is that he may possess a more defensible frontier to resist the invasion when it comes."

The writer did not believe that in such arguments the Prussian minister was expressing his own thoughts ; —he was too sagacious either to ignore the enduring provocation which the annexation would constitute or to believe that in default of such a stimulant

France, after all she had suffered, would again willingly encounter war. He was driven on by a force behind him,—the vindictive rage which, as all information went to show, had been engendered in Germany by the fierce passions of war. The very consideration which, in the judgement of onlookers, condemned territorial annexation, was what made it in the eyes of Germans desirable. "Unless they enjoy the pleasing sensation of witnessing the mortification of France, they will think the objects of the war are only half attained." They were, in fact, showing all the signs of military intoxication, and there was no reason to believe that its demands were yet satiated.

"The time must come when their ambitious dreams will cross the path of some Power strong enough to resent them: and that day will be to France the day of restitution and revenge. We have been wont to talk of the burden of an armed peace; but the peace with which we are threatened will more resemble the quiet of an ambuscade. Europe will look on while France is watching Prussia with affected amity but with unsleeping hatred, waiting till her enemy makes some false step, or falls into any trouble from war, or revolution, or misgovernment; sacrificing all other objects of policy to the one hope of retaliating in some moment of weakness upon the conqueror who has despoiled her. Is there no neutral that will make one effort to rescue Europe from such a future of chronic war? Will England make no sign? Has it really come to this, that the disposal of the frontiers of France and Germany is a matter to us of purest unconcern? Is not the crisis worth some little risk, even the risk of being thought by somebody to utter an unpalatable truth? We shall not conciliate the goodwill of our neighbours by refusing to contribute to the police of nations. . . . We do not venture to pass any judgement on a Government of whose entire course of action we are yet but imperfectly informed;

but we fear that they are yielding a mistaken obedience to the doctrines of a commercial school, whose foreign policy has always been detested by the nation. If their intention is to reduce England to complete isolation—to draw all the profit they can from the arrangements of the great international republic, and yet to bear no share in the cost and danger of its government—we doubt not that they are preparing for themselves a severe condemnation from the English people. We only trust that they are not also preparing for England the national doom which always waits for the selfish and the timid."

The war had postponed the completion of the house that was building at Puys,—its roofless condition fortunately saving it that winter from the billeting of German soldiers,—though, except for an indiscriminate looting of clocks, no complaint against them was reported in that neighbourhood. The house was not inhabited till 1872. In 1871 the combined tragedies of war and insurrection had left France still throbbing with unrest, and, family reasons contributing to the decision, a more extended holiday abroad replaced the usual six weeks on the coast of Normandy. Lady Salisbury and her children spent the autumn weeks at Ischl, from whence a fortnight's drive, in the now vanished *vetturino*, through an intricate course of Alpine passes took them into Italy, where Lord Salisbury joined them. The winter was passed in orthodox fashion in Venice, Florence, Rome and Naples. At Rome, the Italian Government had but recently taken possession after the departure of the troops left by the Emperor Napoleon for the Pope's protection. It was still the dim, unmodernised, unexcavated city of papal days,—far more impressive to the imagination than that which has succeeded it, but no doubt not so hygienic. Lord Salisbury, after a prolonged visit to St. John Lateran (where he prob-

ably grumbled at the mosquitoes that infested the spot at sunset), was struck down with a severe attack of Roman fever, from the effects of which he suffered for many months afterwards. They are still witnessed to in the white frailty which has been perpetuated in the picture of him, painted the following year, which hangs at Hatfield.

In 1872 the Gladstone Government was already showing signs of failing strength. The first glow of triumphant confidence had faded. Bye-elections had begun to go wrong. Suggestions of disillusionment were making themselves heard — particularly with regard to Ireland. Doubts were already being felt as to that new era of peace and goodwill which Mr. Gladstone had foretold as a response to the legislative benefits which he had been shedding upon her. The sporadic acts of violence and disaffection, which had prevailed since the Fenian rising of six years before, still continued, and showed small signs of abating. Lord Salisbury commented upon the disappointment in an article published in the October of that year.

" The optimist view of politics assumes that there must be some remedy for every political ill, and rather than not find it, it will make two hardships to cure one. If all equitable remedies have failed, its votaries take it as proved without argument that the one-sided remedies, which alone are left, must needs succeed. But is not the other view barely possible ? Is it not just conceivable that there is no remedy that we can apply for the Irish hatred of ourselves ? that other loves or hates may possibly some day elbow it out of the Irish peasant's mind, that nothing we can do by any contrivance will hasten the advent of that period ? May it not, on the contrary, be our incessant doctoring and meddling, awaking the passions now of this party, now of that, raising at every step a fresh crop of resentments by the side of the old growth, that puts

off the day when these feelings will decay quietly away and be forgotten ? One thing we know we can do in Ireland, because we have done it in India and elsewhere with populations more unmanageable and more bitter. We can keep the peace, and we can root out organised crime. But there is no precedent either in our history or in any other, to teach us that political measures can conjure away hereditary antipathies which are fed by constant agitation. The free institutions which sustain the life of a free and a united people sustain also the hatreds of a divided people. . . .

" At present we are, or believe we are, fixed in our resolve that no kind of separation shall take place. But it is vain to preach any such resolution to the Irish peasant. He knows enough of recent history to disbelieve it. The one impression our policy has left on his mind is a firm belief in the efficacy of turbulence. In proportion as he has rebelled against and broken the law, the law has been altered to suit his views. His friends blew up Clerkenwell prison, and brought down the Established Church at the same time. They systematically murdered Irish landlords and land-agents ; and, in due time, when the murders had reached an intolerable number, the Irish Land Act was the reply. Nothing of course is easier to say than that those two measures were in no way caused by the fear of menace but simply by an abstract conviction of their justice ; and that the sequence of one set of events upon the other in point of time was sheer accident. If reiteration could only do the work of argument, this assertion would be as clearly proved as any proposition in mathematics. But the peasant does not seem to be convinced." (*Quarterly Review, October 1872.*)

The same sequence of violence and concession had happened before in Irish history. The fate of the Irish Church and the Irish landlord had only converted a presumption into a certainty. A political separation which should place the landlord entirely at the

tenant's mercy might be looked for as his next object of aspiration. And in such an aim there were not only material ideals to inspire him.

"His sentimental reasons—more potent possibly—are harder to analyse. Whether he looks for a triumph of Catholic over Protestant, or of Celt over Saxon, or for some closer union with America, or simply sees before him that boundless horizon of jobs popularly expressed in the phrase 'Ireland for the Irish'—there is no doubt that this feeling is intensely strong, and seems to be growing stronger. The ballot will reveal to us its real intensity. If, as we fear, it is strong enough to command a majority, or even a respectable minority of the Irish representatives, it will gain overwhelming force. It will attract to it a large class of waiters upon Providence who are quiescent because they are not yet sure which side will win. Its advocates have learnt by experience that Parliament is accessible to pressure, especially of an illegal kind. England will again be called upon to redress grievances—the last grievance for which she is responsible—her own presence upon Irish soil. What will a Liberal Government and a Liberal House of Commons do? On Tory principles the case presents much that is painful, but no perplexity whatever. Ireland must be kept, like India, at all hazards: by persuasion, if possible; if not, by force. But on Liberal principles—on the principles of those who have shouted for the independence of Hungary, of Italy, of Poland—of those who mean to govern Ireland according to Irish ideas—what is to be done? . . . To conduct Irish affairs on any principles is difficult enough; but to govern a population which does not wish to be governed by you, on the principle of implicitly attending to its wishes, appears to be about as hopeless a task as ever politicians undertook."

The session of 1873 opened with a ministerial crisis—a revolt of the Liberal majority in the House of

Commons and a temporary resignation of the Government. The defeat — by 3 votes — was gratuitously invited through the Prime Minister's insistence upon an impossibly unpopular measure, and did not indicate any lasting parliamentary disapproval. So the Conservative leaders interpreted it and refused to take office. Lord Salisbury wrote comments upon the crisis to Lord Carnarvon, who was abroad. The letter is representative of that combination of personal intimacy with individual leaders of the party with detachment from their united counsels which characterised his position at the time.

To Lord Carnarvon, March 22, 1873.

" Of course I do not know what passed in secret conclave between Dizzy, Hardy and Derby. Both Hardy and Hunt and, at a later time, Richmond, told me that they had been from the first thoroughly determined not to take office and that Dizzy was of the same opinion. I have some grounds for doubting whether the latter notion was correct. . . . Hardy's ground of action was this ; if we dissolve now, and are beaten,—as we shall be,—we cannot dissolve again for three or four years. If we leave Gladstone to dissolve in July, the chapter of accidents may give us power to turn them out within a year or so ; and then we can dissolve again with satisfactory results,—if the reaction goes on. On this view they acted. I quite think they were right not to take office ; they would have been still more right if they had never turned the Government out. But I am not so sure as to the immediate result."

Some of the causes of the present unpopularity of the Government were fugitive ; the Conservatives could not force them to dissolve this year, and if the elections were postponed for eighteen months the reaction might disappear. He concludes with the

reflection: "That you are never to take office in a minority is not, as a general proposition, tenable doctrine; but it is wholesome and necessary for these particular men or at least for their chief."

That year the family again wintered abroad—this time compelled thereto by the serious ill-health of the youngest boy. Having left the younger children on the Riviera, Lord and Lady Salisbury pushed on southwards to see for themselves whether Sorrento, the place recommended by the English doctor, were actually suitable. They found it shivering in a wind more bitingly cold than any that they had left behind them at home, and it was decided that Lady Salisbury should establish herself with her family on the Riviera or at Biarritz, while her husband returned to England. His movements were hastened by a telegram which met him at Naples, announcing Mr. Gladstone's surprise dissolution on January 24.

The polls began on February 1, and when Lord Salisbury reached England on the 7th, a Conservative majority was already assured, and with the certain and immediate prospect of a Conservative ministry he found himself at once plunged into the torment of a doubt whose decision was probably the most painful, as it was certainly one of the most critical, in his life. Its call came upon him with a certain unpreparedness which was reflected from political conditions. Up to the last twelve months a prolonged reign of Liberal predominance had been generally assumed. Even after the crisis of the previous March, Conservative politicians were expecting the Gladstone Ministry to survive at least into the next Parliament. The restless initiative and constant activity with which he had joined in party warfare need not, therefore, up till recently, have been in any way hampered by questionings as to how their continuance was to be ultimately

reconciled with a persistent repudiation of his party leader. Mr. Disraeli was nearly seventy years old and a quarter of a century his own senior. If his imagination ever dwelt upon the future Conservative Government of which he should be a member, it was as a distant vision from which that central figure would have been withdrawn. But during the last months, as evidence accumulated of the strong reaction of opinion in the country, the probable approach of the dilemma in which he was now placed must have occurred to him, and it must certainly have been present to his thoughts when he parted from his wife in Italy. The letters from which we are about to quote show that he had left her with a purpose resolved to refuse any offer of office made to him—a purpose which represented a decision of long standing. For seven years he had been fixed in his determination never again to work with this particular man ; he had made no secret of the determination and had definitely refused the lead in the House of Lords on the plea of it. A proud man's reluctance to break a resolution which he had deliberately taken upon grounds which had seemed to him decisive, which he had adhered to for years and had repeatedly insisted upon to others was thus added to the motive of deep-rooted distrust by which the resolution had itself been originally inspired. That is presumably the explanation of the sense of " humiliation " to which he refers in these letters as embittering his consent. It is difficult to see how it could otherwise have been involved.

To Lady Salisbury, February 8, 1874.

" This morning Carnarvon appeared. We had a very long talk. He decidedly leans towards taking office. I tried hard to persuade him that we were not in the same boat, and that my refusing would not

involve his doing the same. I do not know how far he accepted that view. He pressed on me strongly that if I remained outside I should be a perfect cypher —which is entirely true ; but slavery may be a worse evil than suicide. I urged that coming back into the same Cabinet with D. as dictator would be practically a submission, and that if he did anything dangerous we should have lost our power of resignation. Moreover, he is very arrogant, and if we did put the bit into our mouths he would make us feel it. He felt the truth of all this—but I doubt whether he is convinced.

"This evening I dined with the Derbys. He hinted much but said nothing directly. I gathered that they had not quite given up the idea of his having the first place. As far as I could, I encouraged it—for it would undoubtedly solve many difficulties."

To Lady Salisbury, February 10, 1874.

"My political troubles are very great. As long as it was only the Tories—and even Carnarvon—who wanted me to accept office, I did not look upon the matter as serious. But now Sir William Heathcote writes to me very strongly in the same sense ; and he is almost the only man in England whose political judgement in party questions I much respect, —and who hates D. as much as I do. Moreover, the Liberals take the same view, as the three enclosed extracts from *Times*, *Daily News* and *Spectator* will show. So that if I refuse I am absolutely alone,—and that with the inference, not obscurely hinted, that I refuse out of spite or because I am afraid of a difficult job. . . . I never knew what perplexity was before. On the one side, humiliation and every kind of discomfort ; on the other, isolation, with the suspicion of cowardice and the consciousness of having shrunk from an important post at a moment of danger. I wish I could talk the matter over with you,—but of that there is no hope, as the matter

must be settled this week. My earnest hope is that D.'s arrogance may be my friend, and that he will not offer it.

" Heathcote's main argument is that, with a large majority (it can hardly now be less than 45), he will have no temptation to play melodramatic tricks or to beg for votes. The argument is difficult to answer —yet I view the prospect with intense repulsion."

The " difficult job " and the " moment of danger " spoken of in this letter referred to a famine of tragic dimensions which was threatened in Bengal. A general outcry had been raised, without distinction of party, for him to take command in this emergency. His persistent conviction of his own unimportance, still apparent at the close of the following letter, was marvellous under the circumstances.

To Lady Salisbury, Friday, February 13, 1874.

" Politics here are weary work. I could stand my enemies—but when my few friends turn against me, I feel done up. I enclose you a letter of Northumberland's, which from him is curious. The people who are now urging me to accept office are Carnarvon, Heathcote, Northumberland and B. Hope : in fact, pretty near all who stood by me in 1867. . . . It is odious for many reasons—among others, that language is used up to which I cannot possibly work. I enclose a specimen from the *Pall Mall.*

" D. has charged My Lady with the negotiation —and I am to meet her to-morrow. If it breaks off, I shall be able to come to you at Bordeaux for a few days ; if not, not. My county day is on the 26th. I could get four or five days at Bordeaux out of the week that precedes or follows it,—assuming that I do not come to terms with D. If I do I can hardly leave England. My impression is that D. does not want to have me but is pressed by others. I am in precisely the same position. But we each want

that the responsibility of failing to agree shall lie with the other."

"My Lady" was the name by which Lady Derby was always spoken of by her first husband's children. She was Lord Salisbury's step-mother,—about his own age—having been his father's second wife before she married Lord Derby. She was pointed out as an intermediary on this occasion, the attitude hitherto taken up by Lord Salisbury hardly encouraging a direct approach.

To Lady Salisbury, Sunday, February 15, 1874.

"I have telegraphed, I may say, incessantly during the week,—but in vain. I have no news of you. . . . My own troubles are worse. Yesterday morning I went up to town and saw Heathcote and had a long talk with him. He is very keen for my joining—on account of his terror of Gladstone. . . . It is a very dreary look-out. The prospect of having to serve with this man again is like a nightmare. But except intense personal dislike, I have no justification for refusing. There is no temptation to him to be Radical in this Parliament—for his majority cannot be less than 50. I should go out into the wilderness with a Falstaffe's regiment of B——, C—— & Co., every one of whom can be had, at any moment, for a Lordship of the Treasury. And the only flag I should carry would be that of personal feeling. The papers take the line that I have no right to decline India in the present emergency. Intrinsically, that is all nonsense, for the evil is done beyond recall. But to shrink from even an apparent post of duty is not to set a good precedent.

"After talking over all this, and much more with Heathcote, I went to My Lady's. Her mission, of course, was very simple. Her question was whether I would refuse *sans phrases*, or whether I would entertain the matter. I said it must depend in the

first instance upon their proposed policy. She told me they had a scheme for offering (as a compliment) a place in the Cabinet to Lord Russell—and trying through him to get the Duke of Somerset to join. That is all moonshine, but D. evidently wants to strengthen his Government as much as possible. I told her further that I would not take any other office but India. We then went and interrogated Derby. I went through all the possible questions I could think of; and his answers were satisfactory on all points except one—and that was the question of special legislation against the Ritualists.[1] On that he was too vague and I said that I must communicate on that point with the chief himself; for that, though I had no fancy for the idiots themselves, any attack on them would certainly break up the Church of England. That question, therefore, remains over. . . .

"As I write I am not certain that the Ministry have not resigned. If so you will have heard of it before you get this.

"I am going to Bedgebury[2] to-morrow and shall get back on Wednesday."

These letters, after the first one, were all written from Hatfield—whither Lord Salisbury had fled from the gossip of the clubs and the tout-haunted streets of London to fight out his own battle in solitude. After the first day or two its issue had manifestly never been in doubt, but the treaty of reconciliation, practically settled at Lord Derby's, had to be ratified at a meeting between the principals, and from this unavoidable necessity Lord Salisbury evidently shrank. Lady Derby sent word that Mr. Disraeli would be glad to see him on Monday morning to discuss the point that "remained over"! He replied that he could not "without very serious inconvenience" get up to London by the hour named; it mattered the less because the point in question,

[1] See next chapter.

[2] Mr. Beresford Hope's house in Kent.

though to him a vital one, was very simple and could be put, if need be, by letter "without giving the trouble of a special interview."[1] He was better than his word, however, realising, no doubt, after he had sent this note that a first interview there must be whether on this subject or another. He called at Whitehall Gardens the same afternoon, found Mr. Disraeli out, and went on to Bedgebury, where a letter pursued him.

From Mr. Disraeli, February 16, 1874.

"Lady Derby tells me that she thinks it very desirable, and that you do not altogether disagree with her, that you and myself should have some conversation on the state of public affairs.

"The high opinion which, you well know, I always had of your abilities, and the personal regard which, from the first, I entertained for you, and which is unchanged, would render such a conversation interesting to me, and, I think, not disadvantageous to either of us, or to the public interests.

"I should be very happy to see you here at your convenience, or I would call on you, or I would meet you at a third place, if you thought it more desirable."

The answer is dated on the same day from Bedgebury.

To Mr. Disraeli, February 16, 1874.

"It would certainly be satisfactory to me to hear your views upon some of the subjects which must at present be occupying your attention,—the more so that I do not anticipate that they would be materially in disaccord with my own. I am much obliged to you for proposing to give me the opportunity of doing so. In conformity with your suggestion I called on you this afternoon, but I was not fortunate enough to find you at home. I shall be in London again on Wednesday morning, and unless you write me word

[1] To Lady Derby, Feb. 15, 1874.

that the hour would be unsuitable I will call on you at six on Wednesday afternoon."

Mr. Gladstone's resignation had already been announced and Mr. Disraeli was expecting his summons to Windsor on the Tuesday evening. He must have this answer first,—the rest of his Cabinet-making was being hung up awaiting it,—and Lord Salisbury's quiet suggestion of staying on for forty-eight hours to finish his visit in Kent could evidently not be tolerated. Presumably there was an exchange of telegrams, for he came up on Tuesday and the decisive interview took place. Curiously enough in his account of it to his wife he says nothing as to the definite offer and acceptance of office which took place at it,—perhaps because he knew it would be in the papers,—perhaps because it was one of those unpleasant facts which are better left to be inferred. He mentions for the first time having heard from her, and it may be that the having got into touch with her again had its account in the greater placidity of his tone.

To Lady Salisbury, February 18, 1874.

"I should like you at home very much, but nothing must be done to risk L.'s health. If you can make arrangements for leaving him there which seem to you not very inconvenient, by all means come. . . .

"I saw D. yesterday. The point upon which I care most is legislation hostile to the Ritualists. Upon a number of subordinate points Derby had satisfied me, but upon this he was vague. D. was very strong in language indeed. I must take it for what it is worth. I will record his language but I don't attach much value to Lord Grey's idea, because the record does not bind them. They can always say I quite misunderstood them. As far, however,

as words went, he pledged himself that the Government would introduce or, as a Government, support no measure against the Ritualists. He likewise professed himself a High Churchman; but said he intended in his patronage to give fair representation to all schools in the Church. The only man I shall really have to depend upon, besides Carnarvon, is Hardy. . . . D. is sublimely ignorant."

The Cabinet was soon formed and presented few surprises. Lord Derby and Lord Carnarvon, like Lord Salisbury, went back to their old departments in the Foreign and Colonial Offices; so did Sir Stafford Northcote to the Exchequer and Lord Cairns to the Woolsack. Mr. Gathorne-Hardy took the War Office instead of the Home Department, which was given to Mr. Cross, one of the few new men of the Ministry. On Saturday the 21st, Ministers went down to Windsor to be sworn in. Mr. Gathorne-Hardy noted in his Journal: "Salisbury and Disraeli seemed quite harmonious"; [1] and Lord Salisbury's letter to his wife the next day was written in a very different tone to those of the last week. Indecision was the only intolerable state. And we may also surmise that though his distrust still undoubtedly remained, personal contact with his chief was already softening the antagonism which had been nourished for seven years on a painful memory.

To Lady Salisbury, February 22, 1874.

"We did not discuss policy at all, but my impression is that D.'s mind is as enterprising as ever and that therefore the experiment will be a trying one. The newspapers, by selecting this moment for puffing me, have made my retreat easy by raising a cloud of dust about it; but in spite of all that, I

[1] *Life of Gathorne-Hardy*, vol. i. p. 336.

feel I am *enfoncé*, and I suspect my colleagues feel it too.

"Meanwhile the language that has been used about the famine rather puts me in the position of a Portuguese sailors' saint. I am frantically appealed to to stop the tempest: of course the tempest will go on, and I shall be taken down and cuffed.

"The present difficulty of the Ministry is, 1st, to find a place for Lord Beauchamp; and, 2nd, to find a Lord Lieutenant for Ireland. It occurred to D. to try and solve the two at once by sending Beauchamp to Ireland. But the Queen was horror-struck. 'Do you know that Lord Beauchamp is a Ritualist?' D. proceeded to assure her of her mistake and by his own account represented him as being of the same views as I am. 'Oh no! Lord Salisbury is not a High Churchman—he is a sound Churchman,—the Dean assures me of that.' So that little Arthur[1] must have been perjuring himself on my behalf. The upshot is that Beauchamp is to be put off with the Lord Stewardship, and Ireland has been offered to the Duke of Northumberland."

[1] Arthur Stanley, Dean of Westminster. He was an old friend of Lady Salisbury's and her family—and of very small stature.

CHAPTER III

PARLIAMENT AND INDIA

1874–1877

The pre-eminent place which Lord Salisbury, in his negotiations with his leader, gave to the question of anti-Ritualist legislation would already have been comprehensible to many of his contemporaries, though in that month of February there were probably few who foresaw the amount of excitement which the subject was to arouse in the course of the next few months. The Ritualist movement was a comparatively new feature in the Church's life. The innovations which it had introduced into her services were greatly resented outside the ranks of its own followers, —British conservatism reinforcing Protestant fears in a common indignation. Extremists had embittered the quarrel by organised agitation, and some recent cases of open and successful defiance of authority had given that agitation point. The public, ignoring the difficulties inherent in any effort at coercion where religious feelings are involved and those specially introduced into this problem by the legal uncertainties of the rubrics, attributed the failure to arrest the practices to which they objected solely to a weakness in the executive machinery. During that winter the clamour for it to be strengthened by legislation had become insistent.

Lord Salisbury was but very little interested in

the subject matter of the controversy. The only part of the agitation with which he sympathised was that inspired by the teaching of habitual private confession—("habitual" being emphasised),—which was admittedly not amenable to the law. His strong and deep-rooted hostility to this practice might be taken as one among many evidences of the typically English quality of his mind. Speaking of it in the House of Lords in the previous session he had described it as a practice which, in whatever community it had prevailed, "had been injurious to the moral independence and virility of the nation to an extent to which probably it had been given to no other institution to affect the character of mankind." Deprecating the almost hysterical alarm which was felt at the time as to the possibility of its extension, he had pointed to the reasons which must always make it repellent to the "idiosyncrasies which have been developed among Englishmen ever since they became a free people." "I believe that these reasons, apart from religious doctrine, have such powerful influence upon the English people that it would require the very strongest conviction of a positive revelation to induce them to conform to a practice which is so utterly opposed to their feelings."[1]

But this question, touching as it does, from whatever point of view it is regarded, upon the deeper spiritual realities of life, had nothing in common with the ritual observances that were now in dispute. These were in his eyes merely trivial. He repudiated the symbolical significance needlessly or gratuitously attached to them, and unreservedly condemned the clergy who for such insignificant cause were prepared to imperil the peace of the Church and to disregard the episcopal authority which they had sworn to

[1] Hansard, July 14, 1873.

respect. But in the present agitation against them he saw issues opened of greater seriousness. It challenged that jealousy of the intrusion of secular authority into spiritual matters which throughout history has appealed to the strongest religious passions, and in the partisan conflict which it had engendered it ran immediate danger of dividing the Church into two opposing armies each fighting in support of its own extreme wing.

His particular demand upon Mr. Disraeli in this connection seemed at first sight superfluous. That statesman had as yet made no public declaration on the subject, and the assurances which he gave so readily were no doubt sincerely based upon an entire indifference with regard to it. But pledges had been plentifully exacted by the protesting party during the recent elections, and Lord Salisbury was probably aware of the Queen's strong feelings in the same direction. As the event proved, he diagnosed accurately the effect which the pressure of such forces would have upon the Conservative leader where no strong convictions of his own were in question. The engagement now required of him, with the warning thus conveyed of his colleague's attitude, probably saved him in the ensuing time of temptation from commitments which might have endangered the continued existence of his Government.

At the outset he showed a ready willingness, not only to adhere to the understanding come to, but to seek Lord Salisbury's advice upon the different phases of the question as they arose. He had proposed Lord Beauchamp to the Queen for appointment as Lord Steward, and Lord Bath — whose views were similar — as Lord Chamberlain. She asked for an assurance that they would not identify themselves in any public way with the extreme party in the Church.

Mr. Disraeli appealed for help to Lord Salisbury, who promised to use his influence, and on the other hand suggested that his chief should urge upon Her Majesty the dangers to the Establishment which might result from pressing the Ritualists too hard. "Of course this applies to graver matters than household places. Mere discountenance will do little harm: but I should look with gravest alarm to any action on the part of the Legislature." [1]

As to that, the decision was taken out of Ministers' hands. The Bishops had decided to ask for legislation, and a week later the Archbishop sent Mr. Disraeli a memorandum of their proposals urging that the Government should promise them its support. Mr. Disraeli forwarded the memorandum to Lord Salisbury for his opinion.

To Mr. Disraeli, March 2, 1874.

"Most people will sympathise with the Archbishop's desire to prevent 'rash innovations which destroy the peace of parishes.' The difficulty is to devise the legislation that will do this without producing a civil war in the Church of England. The Memorandum is vague and upon the most essential point ambiguous. I cannot help thinking that the acquiescence of the Bishops is due to that cardinal ambiguity.

"It proposes to give to a Bishop, acting with a council of clergy and churchwardens, a power of forbidding, under pain of sequestration—*something*—but what? May they forbid anything they please? or only anything illegal? The distinction is vital: but there is nothing in the Memorandum to indicate which kind of power they are to have."

On the first alternative the powers asked for

[1] Feb. 22, 1874. For the facts which follow as to the genesis and progress of the Archbishop's Bill I am mainly indebted to the admirable account in Mr. Buckle's *Life of Disraeli*, vol. v. pp. 316-327.

would be inconceivably despotic, and on the second some further machinery would evidently have to be provided to decide what *was* illegal. On March 20 Mr. Disraeli sent Lord Salisbury a letter from the Queen urging, not only that Government support should be given to the Archbishop's Bill, but that that measure should be so drawn up as to avoid any possibility of compulsion on those clergy who failed to keep the law on the side of omission. Lord Salisbury replied indignantly, "Of course I cannot—and I suspect other members of the Cabinet could not—support such a Bill as is here sketched out."

Meanwhile, under his advice, the responsible leaders of the High Church party had been doing their best to restrain the provocative activities of their extremists,—though under difficulties which witnessed to the sense of retaliatory resentment which the agitation was already giving rise to. "I have seen Liddon," writes Lord Salisbury in this same letter. "He was very moderate; promised me that he and Pusey would write to the chief Ritualists in the most earnest terms to warn them of the danger of their proceedings. This has been done. But he told me that he was being treated as a renegade by a large section of his party."

This appears to have been the last occasion on which Lord Salisbury was consulted by the Prime Minister. The indifferent neutrality of February was fast disappearing and Mr. Disraeli was surrendering himself whole-heartedly to the current of angry religious partisanship which was passing over the country. He adhered to the engagement which he had taken to Lord Salisbury, though his personal support of the movement approached closely to the limit which divides official from unofficial action. A colleague sympathetic with Protestant feeling in the

person of Lord Cairns was called into counsel. His respect for the principles of English law insisted upon changes in the proposed Bill, and under his advice and that of the Prime Minister it was materially altered,— a machinery of summary prosecution under the existing law replacing what had apparently been the original intention of investing bishops and churchwardens with arbitrary powers of sequestration.

This new Bill was introduced by the Archbishop to the House of Lords and was read a second time on May 11. There is no record of the circumstances under which Lord Salisbury was commissioned to act as spokesman for the Government on this occasion. The post may have been offered to him by his chief or demanded by himself as a reassurance of neutrality. The carefully guarded form of words in which he announced the Government's position may probably be taken as representing the compromise at which the Cabinet had arrived. " We do not oppose the second reading of the Bill. At the same time we do not hold ourselves responsible for its introduction." He admitted a cause for legislation in the lawlessness of which a small number among the clergy were showing themselves guilty,—lawlessness which he reprehended in strong language. But the bulk of his speech was directed first, to insisting upon the impossibility of enforcing literal obedience to the rubrics, and secondly, to the great danger of alienating the body of moderate High Churchmen and interfering with the compromise of toleration under which the Church of England existed.

" There are three schools in the Church which I might designate by other names, but which I prefer to call the Sacramental, the Emotional and the Philosophical. They are schools which, more or less, except when they have been crushed by the strong

hand of power, have been found in the Church in every age. They arise not from any difference in the truth itself, but because the truth must necessarily assume different tints as it is refracted through the different *media* of different minds. But it is upon the frank and loyal tolerance of these schools that the existence of your Establishment depends."

The problem, he concluded, was how to repress exhibitions of "wilfulness, lawlessness and caprice" without injuring the conscience of either of these three schools of thought. He did not suggest that the Bill before them would prove a solution of that problem, and the Archbishop in his reply expressed his grave disappointment with his tone and language. He could hardly urge publicly, what he no doubt felt privately, that for a measure which had been practically placed in his hands by the Prime Minister himself he had expected a less dubious form of Government support.

The Bill was considerably amended in Committee, —largely in the direction of assimilating its machinery to that already existing; and on the third reading Lord Salisbury dismissed it as one of which in itself "it was impossible to speak too lightly." If he might suggest a short title for it it would be "A Bill to give £3000 a year to the Dean of Arches and to reprint certain minor portions of the Clergy Discipline Act" [1];—an estimate of its revolutionary powers which subsequent experience has fully justified. But he could not speak in the same tone of the feeling of resentment which its passage had aroused among the clergy and which extended far beyond the ranks of the actual lawbreakers. It had been produced not so much by the Bill itself as by the language used by its promoters. If they had taken the position that law

[1] Hansard, June 25, 1874.

ought to be cheap and procedure easy, they would have needed no other justification. But they had allowed their measure to be made the expression of one party's anger against another and had stirred passions which would not easily be appeased.

In the House of Commons the style of advocacy which he deprecated was rampant. Political party divisions were obliterated. Mr. Gladstone criticised the Bill, eloquently and at length, and was supported by Mr. Gathorne-Hardy, a Tory Cabinet Minister; while Sir William Harcourt, from the Liberal front bench, was foremost in provocative attack upon the High Church position, and Mr. Disraeli declared, without circumlocution, that the object of the Bill—and his own—was to "put down Ritualism." Only one amendment of importance was, however, introduced. The Bill, as it stood, gave the Bishop an absolute veto on all prosecutions initiated under its provisions. This veto the Commons proposed to limit by allowing the prosecutors to appeal against it to the Archbishop. When the Bill returned to the Upper House Lord Cairns moved to agree with this amendment, not as approving of it but for fear of losing the Bill altogether, Parliament being then within a few days of its prorogation. Lord Salisbury spoke strongly in the opposite direction;—if the clergy were to be saved from "the malignity of wandering societies," prosecutions must be absolutely controlled by the Bishop who alone could have personal knowledge of the circumstances. He poured characteristic scorn on the warning that the Bill might be lost if the Commons were resisted. "Much has been said of the majority in 'another place' and of the peril in which the Bill will be placed if the clause under discussion is rejected. There is a great deal of that kind of bluster where any particular course

is taken by the other House." The promoters of this proposal were the most ardent supporters of the Bill and would certainly not vent their vexation by imperilling it: "I, for one, utterly repudiate the bugbear of a majority in the House of Commons." [1] The House supported him, the amendment was rejected, and, as he had anticipated, the House of Commons decided not to risk the Bill by insisting upon it.

The debate there was, however, the occasion of a "personal incident" which became the source of much excited comment at the time. Sir William Harcourt was very indignant with Lord Salisbury, and, misquoting his speech of the night before, charged him with having described the deliberate opinion of the House of Commons as "bluster" and the voice of its majority as a "bugbear," and made a fervent appeal to the Prime Minister to defend the honour of the House of which he was the leader against "the ill-advised railing of a rash and rancorous tongue." To the delight of the Opposition Mr. Disraeli responded. He recalled the known characteristics of his "noble friend": "He is not a man who measures his phrases. He is a great master of gibes and flouts and jeers." And he pointed out that Lord Salisbury had probably been moved by the consideration that "by taunting respectable men like ourselves as being a 'blustering majority'" he might irritate them into an insistence which would end in losing the Bill,—the issue which he most wished for. Mr. Disraeli hoped that they would not fall into the trap.[2]

He no doubt believed in this genesis of the provocative language which had been attributed—erroneously—to his colleague. He had identified himself with the Bill's fortunes, and his annoyance may well

[1] Hansard, August 4, 1874.

[2] Hansard, August 5, 1874.

have given unintended bite to his chaff. Lord Salisbury, referring later to this incident in a letter to Lord Carnarvon, comments : " Dizzy's impassibility I have always looked upon as a myth. When he is beaten or in danger of being beaten his temper gives way entirely." [1] If this were so on this occasion he quickly regained his self-control, as within two hours of the speech being made—it was at a Wednesday's morning sitting—Lord Salisbury received a note of explanation at the India Office. It was the first intimation that reached him of what had occurred, and with some amusement he responded to its appeal on the spot.

From Mr. Disraeli, August 5, 1874.

" Harcourt attacked your speech in House of Lords last night. I conceived a playful reply to his invective, but what was not perhaps ill-conceived was I fear ill-executed, and knowing what figure that style of rhetoric makes in ' reports ' I write this line to express my hope that you will not misconceive what I may have been represented as saying—or believe for a moment that I have any other feelings towards you but those of respect and regard."

To Mr. Disraeli, August 5, 1874.

" I am afraid I must infer from your letter that when I open my paper to-morrow morning I shall find myself the subject of a severe castigation, not only from Harcourt, but also from you. If so, I shall not doubt that I deserve it ; and I am too much accustomed to speak my own mind with very little restraint to complain if others, in the course of their argument, find it necessary to fall foul of me.

" If we are to make apologies to each other on this head, I must begin, I fear, by making mine to the Chancellor, whom, in my anxiety to get a majority, I treated somewhat cavalierly last night.

[1] August 14, 1874.

But Parliamentary life would be unendurable if people took such incidents in bad part."

Thus the incident had been closed between the principals before newspaper readers had begun even to discuss the sinister probabilities of its development. Another had preceded it, also connected with Church politics, which did not become public, but which tried Lord Salisbury's loyalty to his chief far more seriously. The Government had introduced a Bill for transferring the powers of the Endowed Schools Commission to the Charity Commissioners. The churchmen in the Cabinet had secured the inclusion of clauses in this measure which provided that wherever Trust deeds contained conditions which without stating directly the Church character of a school indicated it (as by recognising a Bishop's authority, etc.),—that character should be preserved to it. In the Act of 1869, instituting the Endowed Schools Commission, this provision had been restricted to Trust deeds dated subsequently to 1660, on the plea, urged by Nonconformists, that before the Toleration Act of that year founders had had no option but to include such conditions. An outcry was now raised as to the iniquity of reversing a settlement which was not yet five years old. The Bill passed its second reading by a majority of 82,—which was diminished by about twenty votes on an amendment specifically directed against these clauses. Though there seemed no danger of defeat in the lobbies the last week in July had been reached, a desperate resistance was threatened by the Opposition on this point, there were grumblings in the party, and, in spite of Lord Salisbury's strong protest, the Cabinet decided to drop the clauses. Lord Carnarvon was away at the time, ill.

To Lord Carnarvon, July 23, 1874.

"Dyke[1] was with me this afternoon. He had evidently been sent by Northcote. His mission was to propose that the Bill should pass without the new clauses—in other words renewing the Acts of 1869 and 1873 unchanged save with new Commissioners. . . . He told me he was to go to D. at 3, and since that hour I have received notice of a Cabinet at 12 to-morrow. There will no doubt be hot water. If I am pressed very hard and I see no other mode of escape, I am thinking of offering these terms. [He suggests expedients for postponing any permanent decision for one year.] It is unsatisfactory, and will involve much worry. I should much prefer if I can get it, dropping the Bill."

To Lord Carnarvon, July 24, 1874.

"Cabinet very unpleasant. I carried neither point. The whole of the rest insisted on taking all the Church clauses out of the Bill—on passing the rest—and refused to make it temporary. All I got was a public announcement that the amendments raised by the clauses would be taken up again next year. I feel the matter is too small to resign upon,—but my position is very disagreeable. . . . D.'s language very much the reverse of pleasant. I am very glad you were out of it—for it would have annoyed you and done your health no good—and your presence would not have retrieved the day. We were too thoroughly over-matched."

In the same letter in which he comments retrospectively upon the "flouts and jeers" incident,—which he dismisses as one to which "I have never attached any importance,"—he adds: "The Endowed Schools Bill I cannot even now think of without indignation. It showed that Dizzy had not lost the fatal habit of giving more consideration to the one

[1] Sir William Hart-Dyke, at that time chief Conservative Whip.

trimmer who wants humouring than to the ninety and nine staunch men who need no persuasion." [1]

During the next two years peace reigned in the Cabinet and in Parliament. We read of no further difficulties between the Prime Minister and his Indian Secretary. Their correspondence became less formal; —in the spring of 1875 the " My dear Lord " and the " Dear Mr. Disraeli " become merged in unadorned surnames on both sides, while their notes on current business are enlivened with the touches of humorous irony which were characteristic of them both. In Parliament, the Conservative Government, having got rid of ecclesiastical disturbers of its peace, was fulfilling the mandate for unexciting " business " legislation with which it had been returned to power.

Lord Salisbury's only contribution to this legislation was in his character as Chancellor of Oxford. A Commission appointed some years previously to enquire into the financial position in Oxford and Cambridge had sent in its report at the close of 1874. Its main feature was the contrast which it brought out between the poverty of the Universities and the wealth of the Colleges. The contrast found manifest expression in actual conditions;—in the inability on the one hand of the Universities to meet the growing demand for education in the newer arts and sciences and still less to encourage original work in those fields,—and, on the other hand, in a plethora of prize fellowships,—or, as Lord Salisbury described them with a name that adhered, of " idle " fellowships in the Colleges. The Universities themselves were crying out for assistance from Parliament in the task of producing a more fruitful equilibrium of resources, and in the spring of 1876 Lord Salisbury introduced

[1] To Lord Carnarvon, August 14, 1874.

a measure for setting up a Commission for Oxford,—with the promise of one for Cambridge to follow. It was to be given powers, in consultation with the University and College authorities, to make schemes and frame statutes, and was left a large liberty of decision in detail. But its attention was directed especially towards a creation of additional professorships in various new sciences with the object both of enlarging the field of study and of endowing original research,—and towards finding funds for this purpose by a severe restriction in the number of fellowships held without any obligation of service to the University. Lord Salisbury in introducing the Bill devoted a large part of his speech to this latter subject, and by his rather wholesale condemnation of the system, and still more perhaps by the invidious nickname which he imposed upon the fellowships in question, called down upon himself many denunciations.

A detailed account of Lord Salisbury's departmental work as Indian Secretary would be beyond the scope of the present book and would scarcely be remunerative biographically. Though on one or two occasions he asserted his authority with no uncertain voice, in most questions of legislation or internal administration he followed the accepted constitutional tradition and left the initiative with the Government in India. His contributions to these questions, therefore, as with other Secretaries of State, were mainly consequential and advisory,—only urging an independent view in matters of Imperial concern or on which the House of Commons was likely to entertain strong opinions.

His belief in the virtue of a single inspiration and in the evil of hampering it by the intrusion of competing ideas made him chary even of suggestion. In

a letter to Lord Northbrook written in the spring of 1875 he apologises for having been too prolific of advice as to the famine policy in Bengal when he first came into office the year before. He explains it by a confidence of personal feeling. In 1866 his inexperience had at the outset left a similar famine in Orissa to be dealt with by the Government on the spot. They took no precautions and a great loss of life had ensued: "Perhaps if I had interposed at once, they might have been stirred from their apathy, and that vast mortality might have been lessened. I never could feel that I was free from all blame for the result."[1] This memory had impelled him to trouble Lord Northbrook with suggestions which he recognised now to have been unnecessary and intrusive.

The problem of combining an independence of initiative in the local Government with the responsibility for final decision which was inherent in that at the centre was a subject often dwelt upon in his letters. It could only be solved in his view by constant and intimate communication between the two authorities. He found Lord Northbrook difficult to get into touch with in this respect, either from a reserve and shyness of confidential intercourse or from a belief, which was quite explicable, that a too frequent consultation with London would endanger rather than safeguard freedom of action in Calcutta. But, on one occasion at least, this lack of communicativeness resulted in placing the two Governments in open opposition to one another. Lord Salisbury had pledged himself publicly to repeal the much-disputed Cotton Duties as soon as Indian finances should allow of any remission of taxation. In the summer of 1875 the Governor-General's Council, without informing the Home Government or giving opportunity even

[1] January 27, 1875.

for discussion, passed a Tariff Bill which reimposed these duties while substantially lowering others. Lord Salisbury could only avoid a breach of his pledge by disallowing the Bill, — a proceeding to which he strongly demurred as derogatory to Viceregal authority. His letters during that autumn and winter contain repeated protests against the alternatives thus forced upon him.

With Lord Lytton, who succeeded to the Viceroyalty in the spring of 1876, these difficulties disappeared. He cordially endorsed his chief's views, and the two men corresponded throughout with a fulness and intimacy of counsel which made misunderstanding impossible. They sometimes disagreed, and on these occasions the freedom which characterised their communications was displayed in the expression of their differences. But a sympathetic comprehension was the note which normally characterised the correspondence, — enlivened by fine touches of ironic criticism and responsive humour. They were notably in touch in their attitude upon the racial question, which became prominent in connection with certain brutalities on the part of individual Englishmen towards their coloured fellow-subjects. Lord Lytton dealt with them sternly, and thus incurred great unpopularity among a certain section of Anglo-Indian opinion, Lord Salisbury supporting him strongly and warmly resenting the resistance offered to his policy by his fellow-countrymen. In its insubordinate virulence it contained, he declared, possibilities of dangerous development which made it the more necessary to "lay the foundations of some feeling on the part of the coloured races towards the Crown other than the recollection of defeat and the sensation of subjection." [1] A little later the final remission of the cotton duties,

[1] July 7, 1876.

with which Lord Salisbury himself was specially identified and which was much resented by the Anglo-Indian mercantile community, deflected the attack on to his own head.

To Lord Lytton, May 11, 1877.

"I think you are living down the terrible wroth of Anglo-India;—I observe a tendency to attribute your supposed shortcomings partly to the malign influence of the Prince of Wales, partly to the well-known malevolence and other evil qualities of the Secretary of State. This is as it should be. Human nature, especially in the East, craves for a philosophy based upon two principles: and in political Zoroastrianism the Viceroy, in all the splendour of the radiance in which the Civil Service loves to bask, must clearly be Oromasdes; while the S. of S., dark, distant, working his evil by secret influences and nourished chiefly on the Devil's Dust of Manchester, is admirably fitted to play the part of Arimanes."

The strong condemnation of race-arrogance which he repeatedly expressed is not to be altogether identified with the attitude of the modern reformer. He reminds his Viceroy that there must be no "leaving go of the thin rope of power." He does not believe that, politically speaking, anything is to be made of the literary class: "They could not be anything else than opposition in quiet times, rebels in time of trouble."[1] "I can imagine no more terrible future for India than that of being governed by Competition-Baboos."[2] The loyalty whose sentiment he was particularly anxious to nourish was that of the native aristocracy, the natural leaders of the people. He applauded a project of the Viceroy for the establishment of an advisory Council of Princes;—but he

[1] June 9, 1876. [2] April 13, 1877.

would advocate it, not on the usual plea for representation, as a safeguard for sectional interests, but on the loftier appeal of an invited partnership in Imperial responsibility.

To Lord Lytton, August 30, 1876.

"They are many of them bound to assist the Queen with their armies in case of war. . . . They are as interested as she is in the guardianship of the frontiers, the commercial interests, the external renown of her Empire: in the maintenance of the blessings of peace and of friendly relations with the various powers who lie upon its borders or are nourished by its trade. They must join you in defending these things if they are attacked or menaced: it is therefore fitting that counsels upon the common weal of the Empire should be exchanged where all can meet and hear, rather than by isolated communication. My meaning is (it is a *nuance*, not a definite proposition that I am enforcing) that they ought not to look on the Council as a machine for checking or guiding you in your dealings with *them*, so much as a means of guiding *you*, and in some measure them, in the dealings of the Empire with those who lie without it. . . . I do not think that the colour—or rather tint—that I am advocating will be less popular than that which I am deprecating. Co-operation for the common prosperity and security is a pleasanter idea, a more grateful subject of contemplation, than consultation for the better ordering of mutual chastisement. Eton schoolboys might like to place constitutional checks on the Headmaster; yet a meeting for devising the best means of beating Harrow at cricket would be more popular than a meeting for drawing up a code of regulations under which boys should be flogged."

The question of principal interest in external policy in India during these years was that raised by Russia's advance in Central Asia with its reaction upon our

relations with Afghanistan. The annexation of Khiva had been achieved just before Lord Salisbury took office, and Russia's next objective was believed to be Merv, lying some two hundred miles south of her actual frontier and on the road to Herat, the westernmost post of Afghanistan. No responsible statesman feared actual invasion, but there was general agreement that if Russia were to secure a controlling influence in Afghanistan she might make it a means of stirring up serious trouble on both sides of the frontier. The political tradition left by Lord Lawrence which had been for some time dominant in India looked to avert such a result by means of diplomatic pressure at St. Petersburg,—mainly because of the conviction that any direct action upon Afghanistan itself was impossible. The policy which had been hitherto followed with regard to that country was to keep the Amir in a good humour, by making him continual presents of money and arms and by avoiding any action to which he showed objection.

Its fruits had not been encouraging. Shere Ali, the actual Amir, had shown himself mistrustful and capricious, and had for some time refused to allow the presence of any British envoy in his country, thus leaving the Indian Government entirely in the dark as to what was going on either there or in the regions beyond where it was known that Russian agents were actively at work.

Lord Salisbury was not much troubled as to the actual movements of the Russian army. "Russia must advance to Merv ultimately," he wrote to Lord Northbrook in the summer of 1874, "and we have no power or interest to prevent it. Herat is quite another matter." But he was made anxious by the helpless ignorance to which we were reduced by the Amir's caprice.

To Mr. Disraeli, January 2, 1875.

"I am getting uneasy as to our lack of information from Afghanistan. Almost all we hear of what happens on the Western frontier comes from St. Petersburg or from Teheran. For it has for many years past been the policy—the successful policy—of the Ameers to persuade the Calcutta Government not to send a European representative into the country. We have only a native Agent who writes exactly what the Ameer tells him. Consequently we know nothing. Sir Douglas Forsyth—the recent envoy to Kashgar—says that *his* agents report to him that Russia is engaged in purchasing the allegiance of the turbulent chiefs, whose obedience to the Ameer is almost nominal. This may be mere alarmist gossip: but it is very uncomfortable to think that for all we know Russia may have covered the country with intrigue: and that to all suggestions of this kind—I receive many from various quarters—I have not a shred of trustworthy information to oppose. I told you of the anxiety I felt on this subject four months ago. I propose therefore to instruct Northbrook formally to take measures for placing a resident either at Herat or Candahar. Cabul is too fanatical to be quite safe. I shall leave him discretion enough to avoid any accidental embarrassment. But this is a measure of some little importance: and I should not be right in taking it unless it commends itself to your judgement."

Mr. Disraeli agreed, and Lord Salisbury, in a despatch supported by a succession of private letters, pressed the matter upon his Viceroy.

To Lord Northbrook.

"Our position with respect to Afghanistan is so anomalous that some steps must soon be taken to set it right. It is the only Power on the face of the earth that, professing to be friendly, will not admit a

representative in its territory from us. The evil is not merely a formal one. It has the effect of placing upon our frontier a thick covert, behind which any amount of hostile intrigue and conspiracy may be masked. I agree with you in thinking that a Russian advance upon India is a chimera. But I am by no means sure that an attempt to throw the Afghans upon us is so improbable." (*February* 19, 1875.)

"I entirely feel with you the importance of not making a false step; on the other hand, we must not be seduced into solving a difficult question by the attractive alternative of doing nothing. . . . We cannot leave the keys of the gate in the hands of a warder of more than doubtful integrity, who insists, as an indispensable condition of his service, that his movements shall not be observed." (*April* 23, 1875.)

Lord Northbrook demurred to the proposal on the ground that it would be impossible to secure the Amir's consent to it. The discussion proceeded throughout that year until in November the Secretary of State insisted that Shere Ali should at least be approached on the subject. He protested against Lord Northbrook's view that such action must necessarily lead to a policy of warlike adventure—to which he himself would have the strongest objection.

To Lord Northbrook, January 14, 1876.

"Whatever the temptation to occupy any portion of Afghanistan may be, it is not increased by the presence of an Envoy at Cabul. To avoid such temptations we must trust to our own self-restraint. We cannot shape our national policy by an ascetic rule, and shun temptation on the side where we believe our moral nature is weak. We must do what is politic, trusting that our successors will have the sense not to draw from it a motive for doing what is impolitic. . . . I have no fear of our being tempted to move troops into Afghanistan unless further onward

steps of Russia should some day drive people here into a panic. But the more inactive we are now, the more we increase the danger of that panic."

Lord Lytton went out to India with full instructions to carry out this policy and also to negotiate an agreement with Khelat,—a Baluchee Khanate lying along the southern frontier of Afghanistan. He entered with energy upon his task, and was met by a resistance on the Amir's part which confirmed the accuracy of Lord Northbrook's information, while the state of mind which it revealed in the Afghan convinced Lord Salisbury more than ever of the error of the inaction which had allowed it to develop. He was proved to be in constant receipt of communications from General Kaufmann, the Russian governor in Central Asia, and showed himself for the time wholly indifferent to English friendship. Lord Salisbury counselled prudence and the avoidance of all menace, but otherwise left the Viceroy a free hand in negotiation. Lord Lytton apologised for not having consulted him upon the text of one of his missives to Cabul.

To Lord Lytton, July 7, 1876.

"I think your discretion was probably sound in not sending me the text of your letter. I could have offered no useful criticism upon it. In fact even if I had fancied I saw flaws in it I should have scrupled to say so, on the principle that you do not address advice to a billiard player at the moment he is about to strike. I might have spoilt your aim, and it was hardly possible I could have made any suggestion that you could have usefully adopted. We settled the main lines of policy in March. As long as you do not step outside them, I should only embarrass you by interposing."

Meanwhile, the other negotiation with Khelat

proceeded rapidly to a successful conclusion. Before the close of the year Lord Lytton effected a treaty which secured to England the control of the Bholan Pass—the most practicable of the frontier gateways of India,—and enabled her to place a garrison in occupation of the fort of Quetta which guarded its eastern approach. The contrasting fortunes of these negotiations suggested a modification in Lord Salisbury's plans. If the Amir should prove intractable, he urged, the importance of his co-operation would be reduced by strengthening our position in Western Baluchistan. The idea was returned to repeatedly in his letters of that autumn and winter.

To Lord Lytton, August 22, 1876.

"I would suggest for consideration whether—if the Cabul mission fails—it would not be wise to give great prominence and emphasis to the Khelat mission. It would be the father of the Central Asian mission of the future. The agent would reside nominally with the Khan—but chiefly at Quettah. He would not only advise the Khan—bring the Sirdars to their bearings—and keep the Bolan open: but he would have leisure for collecting information from Candahar — Herat — Cabul — and Balkh. . . . English rupees would try conclusions with Russian roubles in the zenana and the divan. I would venture to predict that—if he were a competent man—any Afghan Minister, in whom Russian proclivities had been nurtured by a policy of masterly inactivity, would soon find a journey across the Hindu Kush necessary for the preservation of his bodily health."

In the course of the winter Shere Ali offered to send an envoy to discuss terms of settlement with the Viceroy. A conference was opened at Peshawur which led to no agreement. Lord Salisbury was not disturbed by its ill-success. "If he [the Amir]

refuses," he wrote to the Prime Minister, "no harm has been done. A strong position has been secured in Beloochistan, and after a few months' reflection the Amir will see that it is not his interest to deprive himself of the prestige of our support." [1]

The conference was fortuitously brought to a close in March by the sudden death of the Afghan envoy, and in view of the crisis in European affairs which was by then in progress it was decided to welcome the suspension of negotiations which automatically followed. No further steps were taken during the remainder of Lord Salisbury's tenure at the India Office. The question had become merged in one of far wider and more dangerous import in whose development he was destined to be one of the principal figures.

[1] February 24, 1877.

CHAPTER IV

THE EASTERN QUESTION, 1876

CONSTANTINOPLE CONFERENCE

In the summer of 1875 a revolt broke out in the Turkish provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was not in itself an abnormal event—revolt was endemic in those regions where the administrative incompetence of the Porte had to deal with a peculiarly provocative agrarian system. But there were circumstances accompanying this outbreak which prepared for it far-reaching consequences. It coincided with a collapse in Turkish finance : 50 per cent of the Ottoman debt was formally repudiated that autumn—and the remaining 50 per cent was left unpaid. In the capital, impecuniosity bred discontent, which expressed itself in the rapid growth of a "Young Turk" party among the official, or would-be official, classes. From the outset this party was essentially paradoxical and insincere—fluent in its use of all the catch-words of modern democracy, while depending for success upon the support of reactionary fanatics and pursuing it by means of harem intrigues and secret murder. This political menace added to the financial distress aggravated to the point of paralysis the normal inertness of the Pashas in power. An anarchy of civil war spread through the two provinces, and before the winter set in the whole of the surviving Christian population

had either taken to the mountains or was pouring itself, an army of starving refugees, across the frontiers into Austrian Dalmatia or into the semi-independent principalities of Servia and Montenegro.

They were met by an answering excitement of popular feeling which was not wholly spontaneous. Pan-Slavism as an organised force was making its first appearance in international politics—the latest of those racial movements which disturbed the peace of Europe throughout the nineteenth century. It had started in Russia, and in its organised activities was believed to be still directed from that country, though independently of the Czar's Government. Its influence spread rapidly through the Slav provinces of Austria and Turkey, and in Servia and Montenegro it had created a ferment, which when stimulated by this invasion of persecuted kinsfolk from Bosnia and Herzegovina became rapidly uncontrollable.

Europe did not look on passively. The Ottoman Empire, not for the first time, appeared to be on the verge of dissolution, and the six great Powers who had been parties to the Treaty of Paris asserted their right of intervention. Identic Notes and Joint Memoranda followed each other as swiftly as the needs of consultation between six Cabinets allowed. Reform was demanded from the Porte and patience was urged upon its subjects, and both parties were warned of the "ulterior measures" to which the Powers might be driven if their demands were not complied with. But popular passion refused to wait upon the inevitable delays of international action. In May 1876 a further revolt broke out in southern Bulgaria,—destined later to attain a sinister notoriety; at the close of that month the Sultan, Abdul Aziz, was deposed and murdered in a palace revolution engineered by Midhat Pasha and the Young Turk

party; and in July, Servia and Montenegro declared war upon the Suzerain Power and marched their troops across the Turkish frontier.

Meanwhile the two Christian Governments most immediately concerned—those of Russia and Austria—were making private preparation for the expected catastrophe. An understanding between the three Emperors—the Drei-Kaiser-Bund—formed at that time the only recognised grouping in European politics. It was an unstable combination originating in Prince Bismarck's resolve to keep on good terms with both his neighbours and, on that account, not to allow a quarrel between them. Russia was Prussia's ancient ally by a tradition which had never yet been broken, though the bond had recently shown signs of weakening. Austria was moving in the opposite direction, but had some distance yet to travel before she reached that intimacy of association in which she was ultimately absorbed. Sadowa was still an uncomfortable memory, and Austrian soldiers hankered after revenge and advertised Slav sympathies. But the minister actually in power—Count Andrassy—a personal friend of Prince Bismarck's—was a Hungarian, and a strong advocate of the German alliance.

The present crisis had put this artificial combination to a severe strain. The one conclusion upon which the otherwise conflicting counsels of Vienna were agreed was that Russian predominance in the Balkans was inadmissible. At St. Petersburg the normal pressure of the military party for an aggressive policy was now reinforced by Pan-Slavists clamouring for a crusade. The Emperor Alexander was peacefully inclined but admittedly powerless for resistance. Prince Bismarck declared later that, in that summer of 1876, it was only his own refusal of compliance

that prevented a Russian attack upon Austria and compelled the Czar's Government to the alternative of a diplomatic bargain.[1] In July, the Russian and Austrian Emperors met at Reichstadt, and negotiations continued throughout the autumn and winter of 1876. The understanding arrived at was kept secret, but two items in it emerge from subsequent history:—that in the event of a Russo-Turkish war the neutrality of Austria was engaged, and that, in return, her right to occupy Bosnia was recognised. As a security for peace the value of this understanding was limited. The Hungarian element in Austria—Count Andrassy, it was said, among others—had no wish for the compensation offered. They did not want Bosnia; they dreaded the addition which it would bring to the Slav population of the Empire, and their opposition to any advance of Russian power in the Balkans remained, therefore, unappeased.

England was concerned in these continental rivalries only so far as they might react upon the independence of Constantinople. Her road to India—not yet safeguarded by her occupation of Egypt,—lay through regions subject to the Sultan's suzerainty; —his influence was paramount throughout Mahommedan Asia;—his Government could not therefore be suffered to come under the control of any stronger Power. Lord Salisbury concurred in this view, but was inclined to add a corollary. Since Turkey's vassalage would be a danger and since she had become too feeble for independence, the most satisfactory issue would be her elimination as a sovereign Power. In the past he had condemned the Crimean War, and he used constantly to deplore the supreme opportunity which had been lost when the Western

[1] Bismarck's *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. pp. 228-31.

Powers refused the Emperor Nicholas's proposal for partition.

In the early months of 1876, however, the question had not yet become a central subject of Cabinet consideration, and the Indian Secretary's occupation with it was only occasional and superficial. The general dispositions in which he approached it appear in a letter written in the January of that year to Sir Louis Mallet, a member of his Council who was on a mission to Calcutta at the time.

To Sir Louis Mallet, January 14, 1876.

"Peace on this side of the world would be in no particular danger if only Turkey could be persuaded to stop crumbling to pieces. But if the process is to go on as fast as it has been going on for the past twelve months, the time will come when something must be done. A government of some kind or other must be found for all these wretchedly oppressed multitudes. It cannot be left as a no-man's-land. But the division of that kind of jetsam is peculiarly difficult. If the Powers quarrel over it, the calamities of a gigantic war must be undergone. If they agree, people call it a partition and denounce it as immoral."

During that spring and summer the British Government took its part diplomatically with the rest of Europe, but kept in the second line and refused to commit itself to any measure of active intervention. In the country, in so far as any interest was shown, two currents of opinion were apparent. There was the normal assumption — strengthened by recent experiences in Central Asia —that Russian ambition was at the bottom of all disturbances in the Near East, and there was also a growing consciousness and condemnation of Turkish methods of government. Both points of view were

generally present, though in varying proportions. Tory pride of patriotism emphasised suspicion of the traditional enemy—Liberalism was peculiarly alive to the evils of Turkish tyranny. But the line of cleavage was not deep nor always identical with the political parties. Throughout that session, though the Opposition in Parliament was critical, it was not denunciatory, while outside Parliament the subject was practically ignored.

A remarkable change occurred in this respect just after the session's close. Its primary though not its most influential cause was then already some weeks old. Rumours that the Bulgarian revolt had been suppressed in a peculiarly brutal fashion had appeared in the papers even in May. The Turkish Government, having its hands already full in Herzegovina, and apparently panic-stricken at this further rebellion breaking out close to the capital, had enrolled as irregular troops a number of Circassians who were colonised in the province and had permitted them —if it had not actually incited them—to deal as their native savagery dictated with the insurgent peasantry. In June, after the revolt was at an end, a correspondent of the *Daily News* went to investigate facts upon the spot, and in a series of letters written with much brilliancy of sensational appeal presented to its readers an appalling picture of cruelty and bloodshed.

Questions were asked in the House. Mr. Disraeli and Lord Derby, misled as it afterwards appeared by the optimistic reports of the Ambassador, Sir Henry Elliot, who was a convinced believer in the virtues of the Turkish people, expressed disbelief in the truth of the story. A secretary of the Constantinople Embassy was, however, sent to Bulgaria to make enquiry, and his report was made public at the end

of August. It did not support the *Daily News* account in all details and it referred strongly to the provocation which the Turks had received; but it witnessed to horrors on the part of their irregular troops which were sufficient to warrant all possible condemnation.

They were sufficient also to stir Mr. Gladstone to an outburst of passionate eloquence unrivalled even in his own record. He published a pamphlet of fiery denunciation in September, which was followed by other deliverances of the same character both in speech and in writing. The agitation spread with extraordinary rapidity throughout the kingdom; indignation meetings were held in every district;—platform and public re-echoed Mr. Gladstone's execrations;—the Liberal press was filled with exaggerated repetitions of them. At an early stage they began to be directed not only against the Turkish Government and its instruments, but against all Englishmen who were opposed, for whatever independent political reasons, to the immediate expulsion of the Ottoman Empire from Europe. They were concentrated especially upon the Tory leader — an avowed believer in the Turkish alliance,—and those of his followers who agreed with him. One unreckoned result of this diversion was the reaction which it almost immediately produced. For two months, ministerialists bowed helplessly before the storm. But they resented bitterly what they regarded as an attempt to exploit for party purposes a critical situation abroad. When the course of events stirred an opposing current of feeling in the country, with which they themselves sympathised, and which their opponents dreaded, they supported it in their turn with all the unreasoning passion which belongs to party politics. It was in the midst of this tumult of conflicting popular excitements—the

Gladstone agitation on the one hand, the war-fever against Russia on the other,—that British diplomacy had to carry on its work during the two years of anxious negotiation which followed.

Meanwhile, a more serious and purposeful emotion was sweeping through Russia. It was inspired by the contagious excitement of the Servian war, though its expression was organised by Pan-Slavist committees. Volunteers from the Russian army poured in thousands across the Danube to join and officer the Christian troops. In spite of such assistance, these showed themselves utterly inferior to their opponents, and successive Turkish victories added angry intensity to the Russian feeling. In September, the Servians appealed for mediation, but the Turks showed no inclination to have their triumph cut short. The British Government for the first time took independent action. It urged an armistice upon the Porte and proposed to the other Powers that a European Conference should be summoned, immediately upon the suspension of hostilities.

Lord Salisbury was spending his holiday at his house near Dieppe and his letters show an increasing preoccupation with the crisis. Paragraphs dealing with it intrude themselves into his correspondence upon Indian affairs.

To Lord Lytton, September 6, 1876.

"For some time past I have been convinced that we—and all the Governments—have lost all hold on the course of Eastern affairs. The current is running wild and strong and may carry us all much further than we thought of when we parted. . . . I do not despair of being told to write to you for your best civilian to govern the new British province of Egypt."

Lord Carnarvon sympathised warmly with the feeling which had been roused against the Turks and wrote to his friend to express his anxiety that the British Government should take the initiative in bringing the principal offenders in the Bulgarian massacres to punishment.

To Lord Carnarvon, September 13, 1876.

"I agree very much in what you say as to our future policy—only I think I should care more about securing these unhappy provinces from a recurrence of these calamities than for punishing the criminals. . . . For the present I think Derby's speech is as much as can be said. I gather that at Constantinople we are still pressing for an armistice. If we fail, I presume Russia will act; and an entire change of scene will take place. If we succeed there will of course be a Conference, and the instructions given for the Conference will be of primary importance. Elliot is evidently very much disposed to make everything pleasant to the Turk. No advantage to England can result from such a policy now, and their alliance and friendship is a reproach to us. The Turk's teeth must be drawn even if he be allowed to live."

To Lord Derby, September 21, 1876.

"I take the true intent and meaning of all this agitation in England to be simply that this time promises of better Government of Christians won't do alone. Some kind of reliable machinery must be provided for seeing that the promises are kept. All the rest is 'gas.' Gladstone, Lowe and Argyll have a good deal overshot the real public feeling."

To Lord Lytton, September 26, 1876.

"There is no doubt the British lion—whose nerves are not as good as they were—has been driven half mad by the Bulgarian stories: which indeed

are horrible enough in all conscience. No arrangement will be possible which does not in some form administratively detach the revolted provinces from the Government at Constantinople."

On September 23 he took advantage of a ministerial reverse at a bye-election to press his views upon his chief,—diplomatically trying to secure his sympathy by emphasising the Whig origin of the Turkish alliance.

To Lord Beaconsfield,[1] *September* 23, 1876.

"The Bucks election shows that the agitation has not been without effect on our party. It is clear enough that the traditional Palmerstonian policy is at an end. We have not the power, even if we have the wish, to give back any of the revolted districts to the *discretionary* government of the Porte."

He elaborates a scheme for appointing a "Protector of the Christians" at Constantinople,—a proposal which was soon replaced by others and which never saw the light. Then he goes on :

"I was very glad to read the cordial language you used towards Russia in your Aylesbury speech. Our best chance of coming to a peaceful issue of these perplexities is—in my belief—to come to an early understanding with Russia. Our danger is that we should make that result impossible by hanging on to the coat-tails of Austria. Austria has good reasons for resisting the faintest approach to self-government in the revolted provinces. Her existence would be menaced if she were hedged on the south by a line of Russian satellites. But her existence is no longer of the importance to us that it was in former times. Her vocation in Europe has gone. She was a counterpoise to France and a barrier against Russia : but

[1] Mr. Disraeli had been raised to the peerage in August.

France is gone, and the development of Russia is chiefly in regions where Austria could not, and if she could, would not help to check it. We have no reason, therefore, for sharing Austria's tremors; and if we can get terms from Russia that suit us, it would be most unwise to reject them because they are not to the taste of Austria.

"I venture to press this point because I see that Austria is urging a return to a state of things in which the lives and property of the Christian populations of the three provinces will be dependent on the promises of the Porte, and that in this policy she will be backed by the advice of Buchanan[1] and Elliot. I feel convinced that such an arrangement, though conformable to the pure Palmerstonian tradition, is not suitable for this exigency, and that it would not be supported in Parliament."

On the same day—and probably at the same sitting—he wrote to Sir Louis Mallet a curiously contrasting letter. Sir Louis's sentiments were strongly anti-Turk and he had been advocating the immediate expulsion of the Ottoman Empire from Europe.

To Sir Louis Mallet, September 23, 1876.

"In the general object you wish for I heartily concur. I deplored the Crimean War—and I heartily wish the Turks were out of Europe. But as far as I can see at present, the difficulties seem to me insuperable.

"Nobody among the many writers and speakers who have touched this question appears to have a notion of the real cause of difficulty. The obstacle to any reasonable arrangement is Austria; and by that unlucky Treaty of Paris we are bound—to Austria among others—to respect the integrity of Turkey. We might of course snap the bonds of the Treaty—throw ourselves into the arms of Russia,

[1] Sir Andrew Buchanan, British Ambassador at Vienna.

and ignore the rest of Europe. But such a policy would be attended with very great risk. Austria would resist us to the utmost of her power—which in intrigue, if not in arms, is considerable. What Germany would do nobody knows; and Russia distrusts us. The Emperor Alexander is not a man for bold resolves; and we might well find that we had abandoned the existing settlement without having arrived at any better. I am speaking with a knowledge of the negotiations which is now nearly a week old—and matters move quickly now. But as far as my lights go I should say that giving the utmost weight to English will and power in the matter, Austria is too hostile and Russia too lukewarm for such a stroke.

"Austria looks upon small Slav states as Russian outposts and dreads the slightest approach to independence in the revolted provinces, lest she should become *enclavée*.

"The problem is a difficult one to solve—for, in some form or other, security for these populations must be attained. . . . But I believe the form of the Sultanate will have to be kept up longer than the power—and that the name of the Ottoman Government will not pass away till strong and well-governed communities have grown to maturity under its shadow."

It was not unusual in periods of preparation for Lord Salisbury to urge arguments at the same time and with apparently equal conviction on both sides of a disputed question,—a stage in the process of making up his mind which could be rather disturbing to those with whom he conversed. It only lasted till a decision had been taken—thenceforward all his argumentative powers were exclusively devoted to its defence,—to himself as well as to others. But the apparent inconsistency of these two letters is superficial. Two different propositions were in view. The

very effort which he had just been making to persuade the Prime Minister that Austrian claims ought not to be an obstacle to an understanding with Russia, would bring home to him with special force, when he turned to his other correspondent, the impossibility of ignoring them in following a course for which even Russian support could not be counted on.

On October 4 the Cabinet met and Lord Salisbury came over from Puys to attend it.

To Lady Salisbury, October 4, 1876.

"The Cabinet was in the main strong for a more active policy; but F.O.[1] exceedingly recalcitrant. After a good deal of discussion it was agreed: 1. To refuse a proposition of Russia that she should occupy Bulgaria,—Austria Bosnia, and that all the fleets in Besika Bay should sail into the Bosphorus. 2. That a peremptory message should be sent to Elliot requiring the Turk to assent to a six weeks' armistice; and, if accepted, a Conference to follow; if refused, Elliot to leave Constantinople, and negotiations to be carried on directly with Austria and Russia. 3. If Russia occupies Bulgaria, we to occupy Constantinople.

"I doubt if F.O. has assented to this last, but all the rest were against him, especially Great Cat,[2] who was very much for action. Universal feeling in favour of adequate securities."[3]

Early in September Lord Beaconsfield had written to Lord Salisbury that he thought partition would be the end of it, and the action proposed in the event of a Turkish refusal as well as the third of these resolutions suggest that he was himself prepared to take active part in it. But at the close of this letter Lord Salisbury reiterates his doubts as to whether Lord

[1] Lord Derby. [2] Lord Cairns.
[3] For reform in Turkish administration.

Derby's obstruction has been overcome : " Making a feather-bed walk is nothing to the difficulty of making an irresolute man look two inches into the future. . . . I greatly fear more dawdling." Three days later he reports that " Derby went out of town yesterday (Friday) and does not return till Monday. His action cannot be very urgent, therefore. My impression is that in spite of the Chief and the Cabinet he is doing nothing and means to try and gain time."

He was presumably successful, for there is no further allusion to any ultimatum to Constantinople though the Russian proposal was duly refused. Austria also rejected it, and the idea of combined coercive action faded into the background, to be replaced by the more sinister prospect of independent action from St. Petersburg. All through that month the war-cloud darkened. The Turks were compelled at last to an armistice by an ultimatum from Russia. But she herself was said to have begun mobilisation, and there were reports that she was privately negotiating a war loan. In England the anti-Turkish agitation was weakening and umbrageous suspicions of Russian designs were competing for possession of the popular mind. At the Guildhall Banquet Lord Beaconsfield gave expression to this rising sentiment in a significant and menacing phrase. Though seeking peace there was no country so well prepared as England for war " in a righteous cause." The next day at Moscow the Czar announced that, if Europe failed to come to the rescue of the Christians of Turkey, Russia would " act alone."

The Conference of the signatory Powers which had been proposed by England had now become the only hope of averting war between Russia and Turkey, and preparations for its meeting were rapidly pressed forward. It was to be held at Constantinople, and

became the occasion of Lord Salisbury's introduction to diplomacy. The Cabinet, at the Prime Minister's proposal, invited him to attend it as plenipotentiary.

From Lord Derby, November 3, 1876.

"I believe that if you would undertake the duty the result would be satisfactory to yourself, your colleagues and the country. I think your going would be desirable because, as a leading member of the Cabinet, you would speak as one having authority and not as the diplomatists; because your tendencies are not supposed to be Turkish, and the choice would therefore satisfy the public, while your Indian experience will have shown you that Russians are not exactly the self-sacrificing apostles of a new civilisation which our Liberals seem inclined to consider them; because your going would not humiliate Elliot, whom you would find well-informed and useful as a second; because you would hold your own in discussion; and because you would be able to help in the Parliamentary defence of your own acts."

The answer was returned the same day:

To Lord Derby, November 3, 1876.

"I am much flattered by the confidence which is implied in your proposal. Of course in such a matter my services, if they are required, are at the disposal of my colleagues. I am afraid that there will not be much reality in the Conference. I doubt the possibility now of Russia being content with any terms to which Turkey can reasonably be expected to submit. Still it is quite necessary that we should do our part as diligently as if we were assured of a successful issue. So that, if you continue to think I had better go, I will take my part in the comedy with all solemnity.

"Before I start on any such pilgrimage, it will be most important that we should settle what the railways call 'the limits of deviation.' On the one side there

is a minimum of security for the Christians, which no desire for the Turks' welfare will induce you to forgo. On the other hand there is a maximum of interference with his independence which no desire to maintain peace between Russia and him will persuade you to exceed. I think it is very important, before we enter on such a business, to determine, at least roughly, where those lines of maximum and minimum are. If we leave such a question in the vague, we may get hustled at the last moment, and tumble into some unsatisfactory and indefensible conclusion.

"All this, however, we can talk over to-morrow. Where is it to be? and if I am detailed on this duty, when shall I have to start?"

The sense of this letter is expressed with greater brevity in a hastily scribbled note written below one in Lord Beaconsfield's handwriting on a sheet of paper which was probably handed across the table during a Cabinet meeting.

"I want you to go. That is my idea—a great enterprise and would not take much time. B."

"Of course I will do what the Cabinet wishes—but it is essential that your policy should be settled first."[1]

He commented on the offer in a characteristic note to his wife: "It is a sort of proposal one is bound in honour not to decline;—but an awful nuisance—not at all in my line,—involving sea-sickness, much French and failure."

The appointment was received with a chorus of approval from both political parties,—modified only in one or two quarters where extreme pro-Turkish views prevailed. Lord Salisbury's qualities of head and heart were dwelt upon, the clearness of his intellect, his sense of justice, the high integrity of his character.

[1] *Life of Disraeli*, vol. vi. p. 87.

The Opposition leaders were complimentary. Even his old enemy, Mr. Bright, dwelt as he had done once before on the contrast he found between Lord Salisbury's mischievous opinions on home politics and his merits as an Indian administrator.

Speech at Birmingham, December 4, 1876.

"Lord Salisbury is a man against whom a good deal may be said, and a good deal might honestly be said in his favour. Perhaps that is true of most of us. But with regard to his policy at home I think I have observed in it for many years—and I have watched him and sat opposite to him for many years in the House of Commons,—what I could call a hearty unwisdom, that was unfortunate and mischievous. On the other hand I have seen, in his conduct as Minister for India, a great disposition to do what he believes to be just. I can only hope that he leaves his unwisdom for home consumption and that when he arrives at Constantinople his liberality, his justice and his strong intellect will have fair play. . . . If he will rest upon his own strong sense he may do great good. If he acts as the subservient representative of his chief —judging his chief by his own language—then I think he may do us a very serious ill."

Liberal politicians at this time assumed in Lord Salisbury a greater sympathy with their attitude than really existed. He was very indignant with the partisanship which they had introduced into the discussion of foreign affairs, and his hatred of war made a crusader almost as antipathetic to him as a jingo. Writing to Lord Bath [1] on November 10, after protesting against the assumption that Ministers were less intent than their critics upon the reform of Turkish

[1] The 4th Marquis of Bath. He was a contemporary of Lord Salisbury's at Christ Church. He was a High Churchman and had strong sympathies with Russia. In '78 he followed Lord Carnarvon into temporary opposition to the Conservative Government.

misgovernment, he concludes with an allusion to the encouragement which Liberal enthusiasts were now openly giving to a war of liberation—and conquest—on the part of Russia, "I will not discuss the future. With much of what you say I agree in substance,—though perhaps I should like to add a sentence or two as to the wickedness of trying to cure oppression by enslavement and murder by extermination." On the other hand a closer study of original documents had already suggested doubts as to whether the Turks would accept his own definition of what "might reasonably be expected" from them. In criticising the selection of Constantinople as the place of meeting, he points out to Lord Derby that, after all, it might be Turkey rather than Russia that would prove unreasonable,—"no impossible contingency." (*Nov. 9.*) His instructions, as drawn up in Cabinet, empowered him to demand administrative autonomy for the insurgent provinces, with efficient guarantees for its being a reality, but excluded acquiescence in the military occupation upon which it was feared that Russia still intended to insist.

Lord Carnarvon undertook to supervise the routine work of the India Office during his absence, but there were one or two outstanding points of difference between him and his Indian Council which had to be settled by himself, and the last few days before leaving England were passed in a hurry of competing engagements.

To Lord Lytton, November 17, 1876.

"I am afraid my chances of writing to you to-day at any length are very restricted. As you may imagine just before starting on this futile mission of mine, my time is a good deal engrossed. What with packing, ambassadors, couriers, Foreign Office instructions, Council meetings here, and Cabinets, my

mind is in a state of perfect distraction. Within these two days we have to settle the terms on which we are to act in Conference,—and to fight the Assemblage and the Fuller case."

He left England on November 20, accompanied by Lady Salisbury and his eldest son and daughter, and by a staff selected for him from the Foreign Office. Its chief, Mr. Philip Currie, became afterwards his principal private secretary in '78 and again in '85, —the most trusted and confidential as he was the earliest of his friends in the department. He rose to be Permanent Under-Secretary and then passed into diplomacy, continuing to serve his old chief as ambassador, first at Constantinople and then at Rome. Another connection, as lasting personally though not officially, dated from this time. Mr. Henry Northcote, Sir Stafford's second son, — afterwards Lieutenant-Governor of Bombay and Governor-General of Australia,—quitted the Foreign Office for Parliament soon after serving on this mission, but the intimacy which he now formed with Lord Salisbury and his family was perpetuated in a lifelong friendship.

Since his appointment the new plenipotentiary had been making a rapid study of diplomatic records, but on his journey out to Constantinople he profited by a more effectual means of self-instruction. He travelled to Brindisi circuitously, by way of Paris, Berlin, Vienna and Rome,—taking the train by night and allowing a day or two at each capital for interviews with the Sovereigns and principal statesmen. This pilgrimage of consultation was originally suggested by the Prince of Wales and was apparently deprecated by Foreign Office authorities—presumably as superfluous. Lord Beaconsfield urged it upon his colleague.

From Lord Beaconsfield, November 10, 1876.

"I think on these matters H.R.H. is a better counsellor than Lord Tenterden.[1] The Prince of Wales is a thorough man of the world, and knows all these individuals personally.

"You must remember we suffer from a feeble and formal diplomacy and that there has been little real interchange of thought between the English Government and foreign Powers. I agree with the Prince and think it highly desirable that at this moment our communications with the Powers should be lifted out of the slough of despond they have so long grovelled in.

"Also, personally for yourself, I wish it. This is a momentous period in your life and career. If all goes well you will have achieved an European reputation and position which will immensely assist and strengthen your future course. You should personally know the men who are governing the world, and it is well to know them under circumstances which will allow you to gauge their character, their strength, and their infirmities.

"Consider this matter for yourself, and whatever you decide on I will support—only don't concede your own convictions on the subject to Tenterdenism—which is a dusty affair and not suited to the times and things we have to grapple with."

With his gift for rapidly assimilating information, this journey must be regarded as a notable step in Lord Salisbury's progress from an amateur's interest in foreign affairs to an expert's knowledge of them. The interviews at the German Courts were of necessity the most important,—France had not yet recovered from the stunning blow of six years earlier. He reported the Duc Décazes—the French Foreign Minister—as "leaning towards a recognition of the possibility" of a European occupation,—suggesting Bosnia for Austria,

[1] Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office.

Bulgaria for Russia, and Macedonia for England,—but admitting that there would be serious difficulty in coming to any such arrangement. "I contented myself with the consecrated formula that we could not admit military occupation, but that we had no intention of making ourselves responsible for misgovernment; and that we were earnestly desirous of arranging guarantees." (*To Lord Derby, November 21, 1876.*)

To Lord Derby. Berlin, November 23, 1876.

"Bismarck insisted on seeing me last night on my arrival from Paris—or I would gladly have had a night's rest first. I went to him, however, at ten—and he lectured for more than an hour. The gist of his discourse was to show that his firm resolution not to interfere implied no want of friendliness to us. His ground seemed to be twofold. First, that what we were trying to do in Turkey was hopeless,—you could not set it on its legs, and therefore he would not put himself out of the way for an object which he believed to be illusory; and secondly, that in his position to offer advice was in effect to utter a threat; and that any such measure on his part, though it might be effectual, would be remembered against him by Russia,—'a little time hence.' His view of the prospects of peace was very gloomy. He did not think it possible that Russia after doing so much should draw back. But he thought they had much underrated the difficulty of the task they had undertaken; and he doubted their getting across the Balkan. He encouraged us to take Egypt as our share; failing that he thought it would be very useful to European civilisation that we should occupy Constantinople. But in any case he urged, two or three times, that if a decision became necessary, we should not take it at the first movement of Russia; that events would very likely bring her enterprise to an end; that when she began to feel the exhaustion of

men and money, she would be accessible to reasonable terms; and that no power not having command of the sea could hold Constantinople; and that therefore we could well afford to wait, and not commit ourselves to war with Russia till it became absolutely necessary. He gave me the impression of bearing no love to Russia,—made jokes about Prince Gortchakoff [1] and contemplated with evident satisfaction the trouble into which he believed Russia was rushing by invading Bulgaria. As to Andrassy,[2] his language was friendly but slightly contemptuous; but with respect to the Emperor of Austria it was bitterly resentful. He did not mention France, but the impression he left on my mind was that it chiefly occupied his thoughts, or shared them with his religious quarrel;[3] and that he did not mean to allow any by-end to alienate from him friends who might be useful to him in the hour of trial to which he is looking forward. I think he will help us in the Conference to any solution that seems practical. But he does not believe in a solution; and is only occupied with settling what shall be done when the Turkish Empire comes in pieces. Bosnia and the Herzegovina for Austria: Egypt for us: Bulgaria possibly for Russia: the Turks in Stamboul with some of the surrounding country like the Eastern Empire in its latest days: and the rest for Greece. That I take to be his new map of Europe. His impression was that Andrassy would not refuse to occupy Bosnia, though he did not wish it.

"Décazes was of opinion he wished it and was trying for it.

"*P.S.*—Since I saw Bismarck I have seen the Emperor, who takes a more hopeful view: and thinks that with reasonable guarantees for reforms in Turkey an occupation may be averted. He announced, however, the absolute neutrality of Germany in case of

[1] The Russian Imperial Chancellor.

[2] The Austro-Hungarian Chancellor.

[3] The Kulturkampff,—Bismarck's famous struggle with the Roman Church was then in progress.

difference between England and Russia in terms more absolute than those employed by Bismarck. He said he could not influence the Czar in the sense of peace officially but that he would do so privately : and he told me he had done so quite recently, and repeated me the Czar's answer, which was of course very satisfactory.

" To both master and man I said that if there was no occupation I had great hopes, as we were as anxious as anybody else for reforms and for proper guarantees ; but I did not express any opinion as to the various plans for dealing with the Turkish Empire when it broke up, as these depend on the failing of the Conference, a contingency which is not contemplated by my instructions.

" Both the Emperor and the Crown Prince, who was here later, insinuated the occupation of Constantinople which Bismarck had openly recommended."

To Lord Derby. Vienna, November 25, 1876.

" The result of my visit at Berlin is on the whole to leave me of Odo Russell's [1] opinion, that Bismarck wishes for peace, not war, between us and Russia. I should not by themselves attach much importance to the strong assurances to that effect which I received both from Bismarck and the Emperor. My opinion is founded rather on the nature of their arguments. If Bismarck had wished us to quarrel with Russia it would have been easy to encourage a strong position at the Conference, to dwell on the importance of Turkey, to exaggerate the value of the Danube to Russia, to talk of his great friendship, and to let me *entrevoir* without in the least degree committing himself, the probability of Germany taking an active part on our side. He did the reverse of all this. He insisted on his intention of observing an absolute neutrality : said that the Danube was a legend : treated the success of the Conference as impossible :

[1] Lord Odo Russell, British Ambassador at Berlin.

occupation as certain: and devoted himself to the task of showing that occupation in itself ought not to lead us to warlike action. He enlarged on this two or three times: showing how Constantinople was not in danger—how it was easy and would be unobjectionable for us, if we wished, to occupy it: how it could not be held by a Power that had not the command of the sea. And he ended by using the remarkable words: 'What I plead for is, that when Russia crosses the Danube, if a decision is necessary, you should at least suspend the decision for a little time.' The Emperor spoke in the same sense: 'Entre l'occupation et la guerre il y a une étape—la guerre ne serait pas immédiatement nécessaire.' Both enlarged upon the necessity of Germany keeping well with both her neighbours—and the Emperor entered into a calculation of the relative strength of our fleets to show how much he had to fear from a breach with us. Bismarck is doubtless Machiavellian: but he would hardly have carried that system so far as to ply me with the very arguments calculated to make us do what he did not want. Another argument in the same sense I draw from the assertions of the Crown Princess. She is shrewd, behind the scenes, and hates Bismarck like poison: and she said several times with much energy, 'You may be quite sure that it is true that Bismarck wishes for peace.' Both she and the Crown Prince expressed themselves anti-Russian.

"The conclusion I drew from my day's experience was that Bismarck wished for war between Russia and Turkey—because such a war would certainly diminish the fighting power of Russia: but that he dreaded a war between England and Russia; because absolute neutrality was a very difficult part to play—and any bias observed or suspected might cause a grudge against him, either on the part of England or Russia, on the great day of the *révanche*, which is constantly in his thoughts.

"The point is of some importance—so I thought it better to give you my full reasons for my opinion."

To Lord Derby. Florence, November 26, 1876.

"I was three hours with Andrassy on Saturday, and another hour on Sunday. He was exceedingly talkative and not very coherent. But I gathered from his conversation that he agreed with Bismarck in not expecting a successful issue to the Conference: and that Bismarck further was right in saying that he was not sufficiently opposed to occupation of Bosnia to resign about it: and that Décazes was wrong in saying that he very much desired it. I should say that Bismarck and he have been in close communication, and are more disposed to act in concert than Bismarck and Gortchakoff. The fears expressed by the Duc Décazes that Bismarck is inclined to pounce on Austrian Germany are certainly not shared by Andrassy. He feels quite easy on the side of Germany, but he professes considerable apprehension of Russia. For this reason he objects to any policy for the settlement of the provinces which would be only illusory, and would give Russia a good opportunity of interfering two years hence; for her force would be much greater then, and her railways would be more complete. Bismarck was also of opinion that Russia strengthened by delay. For this reason, Andrassy, though still opposing occupation and declining to give to it the slightest sanction, is inclined to look upon it as perhaps not the greatest of possible evils. But he was very anxious to know whether, if Russia occupied Bulgaria, and he occupied Bosnia, we would occupy Constantinople. I said that we should oppose occupation diplomatically to the utmost of our power, though if Austria did not make it a *casus belli* we of course should not be in a condition or inclined to do so. He said that he certainly should not make it a *casus belli*, as he was convinced that fighting Russia on her own territory was a very hopeless proceeding: and that the Eastern question must be settled in the East. He then pressed me with respect to the English occupation of Constantinople. I said

that I had had no instructions on that subject, as the English Government had not contemplated the failure of the Conference: and therefore had not taken any steps to provide for the exigencies that might follow. At the same time I did not conceal my own personal opinion that some measure for the defence of Constantinople would be inevitable if the occupations to which he had referred were to take place. During all Saturday afternoon he did nothing but discuss the past history of the transaction, and the future proceedings after the Conference had failed. He would scarcely touch on the question of reforms. He was quite of opinion that they should be serious, and should be secured by proper guarantees: but he did not seem to think their details worthy of discussion.

"But Sunday morning when he came, some change had come over the spirit of his dream. He laid the change to some words which intermediately I had said to the Emperor implying that Andrassy was not very hopeful of maintaining peace. But there was some other reason evidently. Anyhow, he obviously came to discuss reforms and to assume that the Conference would succeed. . . . But he seemed to discuss all these things perfunctorily. It did not appear that he really cared about them. One of two explanations of his conduct is probable: either he did not believe in these plans—or he did not really wish the success of any plans at all. He gave me the impression of a man much harassed by pressure from diverse quarters not allowing him either very definite intentions or any confidence in himself that he will be able to adhere to his views. This sense of the necessity of pleasing many different masters made him intensely anxious for secrecy. He began our interviews by making me promise to put nothing into a Blue-book: and before we had done we agreed upon a safe 'extrait' from each other's sentiments, suitable for publication. You will receive it in the despatch which will accompany this letter. He told

me not to confide 'even' in Beust.[1] He recurred two or three times to the question of secrecy.

"To sum up my impressions from Berlin and Vienna. Bismarck dreads in the first degree his coming struggle with France: but he knows he can make no friends there: and therefore he simply prepares to fight. Next he dreads Austria, because she too, has her *révanche* to seek — because the open frontier of Germany is a long one—because she alone can appeal to his discontented Catholics. Therefore he has laid himself out to make friends with Austria —and has got Andrassy, who is the weaker man, to fall very much into his views. Next he fears Russia, but not so much as Austria—for the frontier is not so long, and Russia's present fighting power is less. Therefore he has only neutrality for her—though if the pinch came, that neutrality might become benevolent. For us, whom he fears least, he has only good words: but even us, he is anxious not to alienate.

"Assuming then that Bismarck and Andrassy are for the moment partners, I think they rather wish than not that the Conference may fail, and that Russia should waste her strength on a sterile effort, which may exhaust her present store of strength—hoping that it may require many years of rest for her to secrete another store. But they do not mean her to establish herself south of the Danube,—the interests of Austria would not suffer that. Nor does either wish England to be dragged into the fray: for they have no motive, but the contrary, for wishing her wings clipped. I have confined myself mainly to asking questions. It was not my rôle to suggest policies. In the first place, I do not yet know enough of the chessboard to do it; in the second place, suggestions from the representative of a Power which is not inclined to fight are not of much utility. Moreover, my impression still is, as it has been all along, that the ditch into which the Conference will tumble will be the obstinacy, not of the Russian, but of the Turk."

[1] Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in London.

Count Andrassy's anxiety as to England's attitude in the event of a Russian occupation of Bulgaria is described more strongly in a telegram to Lord Beaconsfield. "He will not make occupation case of war but will occupy Bosnia and wishes us to occupy Constantinople. . . . He was very anxious for definite statement of intentions of England on this head, as he must otherwise coalesce with Russia."

To Lord Beaconsfield. Florence, November 28, 1876.

"You will not care about my proceedings—of which the newspapers will have informed you. But some of my impressions may be worth noting. I have told you in my telegram that I thought Andrassy and Bismarck were in close concert. The curious parallelism of their conversation and arguments made me think this. For instance, Bismarck told me that the Russian authorities were not acting coolly (*i.e.* wisely) for Gortchakoff was a vain man. Andrassy described him as 'un vieux farceur,' 'un vieillard vaniteux.'

"Bismarck said (to explain these threats of war) that Gortchakoff was an old man and 'is anxious to make his exit from life amid a little Bengal fire.' Andrassy said that Gortchakoff had told him that 'il voulait mourir non comme une lampe qui file, mais comme une astre qui brille.' Bismarck said that Russia was now so committed that she must go into Bulgaria and perform a 'pas seul' before Europe, and that when there she would be more easy to treat with, because she would have found practically the difficulties of the undertaking, which now she was under-rating. Andrassy said almost exactly the same thing, except the joke—for Andrassy never jokes. Both thought that she would not attempt to hold Bulgaria; Bismarck, because it was an alien population, which Russia 'who finds she can hardly digest Poland,' could not absorb, and also because, if the Czar were to live out of Russia, the laziness

and want of patriotism of the Russians was so great that the machine could not go on. Andrassy said that the Emperor Alexander had insisted to him that any such attempt must break the Empire in two. I might carry the parallelism much further. Both argued that we should not make the passage of the Danube a cause of war. Both urged that we should occupy Constantinople. Both were thinking very little as to what was to be done at the Conference and a great deal of what was to be done after it had broken up. Bismarck informed me (in answer to a question) that Andrassy was not averse to the occupation of Bosnia, 'il n'y répugne pas.' This I found to be an exact description of the state of mind which Andrassy at all events professed. But it was by no means a matter of notoriety, for Décazes assured me (through Lyons [1]) that Andrassy was earnestly trying to get an excuse for occupation, while Buchanan believed that he detested it.

"Again, in order to see what he would say, I pressed Bismarck with the argument that his abstention might produce the destruction of Austria which I represented as in a critical position. He took this much to heart and gave himself some trouble to show that the Austrian Empire was still very strong: but at the end said that any real danger to Austria was the one condition under which he might have to reconsider his neutrality. 'Aide-toi, le voisin t'aidera,' he added. The next day, the Emperor spontaneously took up the subject, and proved to me historically that though Austria as a matter of fact always lost her battles, she always contrived to pick herself up again. When I got to Vienna, the first thing Andrassy opened upon was this very subject.

"Again both expressed great distrust of Beust and Ignatieff [2] and great affection for Schouvaloff.[3] This parallelism cannot be accidental: and proves that

[1] Lord Lyons, British Ambassador in Paris.

[2] General Ignatieff, Russian Ambassador at Constantinople. A leading champion of Pan-Slavism.

[3] Count Peter Schouvaloff, Russian Ambassador in London.

there is active communication and tolerably close concert between them. Both either are, or wish me to think them, on very poor terms with Gortchakoff. Andrassy (during the four hours I had with him) never mentioned him (G.) without a phrase or gesture of contempt: and Bismarck, after laughing at him pretty sharply to me, abused him still more unrestrainedly to my wife.

"Bismarck seemed to like Andrassy, though a little contemptuously: but he was almost the only man of whose honour he (Bismarck) spoke highly. Of the Austrian Emperor he spoke in terms of unmeasured disgust and dislike. He related almost with passion the story of how Nicholas interfered in Francis Joseph's behalf to restore to him gratis a revolted kingdom, with a chivalry which no other sovereign had ever exhibited before: and how Francis Joseph repaid him with the ingratitude of 1854. 'Such a man's friendship,' he added, 'you can never trust: but it is all the result of a Jesuit education.' It was the same, he said, with the Austrian nobility and royal family. The Jesuits had overdone their work: they found it necessary in order to ensure the submission of their pupils to restrain the pupils' intellectual progress: but they had done it so effectually that the Austrian nobility were unfit even for the commonest State employments. On the Catholic question he enlarged cordially. He seemed still oppressed with the magnitude and power of their organisation. He said, 'I should prefer any revolutionary or democratic institutions to submitting to the unlimited power of the Pope: for the one only affects your life and property, while the other brings your mind into subjection, which is much more humiliating.' This sentence he had obviously been in the habit of using, for he repeated it to me in the same words the next night after dinner in his own drawing-room. This vehement feeling is the only strong difference I could trace between the policies of Berlin and Vienna. Both the Austrian

Emperor and Andrassy ridiculed this craze—as they did the terror in which the French held Bismarck. Both they looked upon as nightmares. There was one other point in which Andrassy differed from his friend. He believed Germany to be in great danger of revolution. He held that it had not the elements of a monarchy; and that the socialists were getting daily stronger. With these two internal dangers—with the intense commercial pressure—and with the ever watchful hostility of France, he held the offensive power of Germany very cheap. My impression certainly was that this was also the feeling at Berlin. They obviously lived in terror of a coalition against them.

"Marshal Macmahon,[1] while saying that even now 'Ils nous mangeront pas tous crus comme la dernière fois,' thought the French would be 'ready' in two years.

"I have given you a sufficient dose of personal details: but in the present case they are of more importance than diplomatic arrangements and projects. What I hear of these I have mentioned in telegrams and in my letters to Derby.

"*P.S.*—I just open my letter to thank you for yours and to say that the occupation of which Bismarck and Andrassy talk is not, I fancy, occupation while the Turks are fighting, but afterwards, when Bulgaria is occupied."

To Lord Derby. Rome, November 30, 1876.

"I write a line before starting for Brindisi. The Ministers here are very peaceful; and have spoken more encouragingly than any since I left England. The Court, on the contrary, *i.e.* the Prince Humbert, and the King, are for war—and are Russian. The talk of Humbert was entirely of the intense enthusiasm in Russia, and of the impossibility of the Emperor drawing back. There is evidently also a strong

[1] President of the French Republic.

military class at Vienna pushing as strongly for war, only in the opposite direction. The people here say that all the Russian civil authorities, including Gortchakoff and Ignatieff, are pushing for peace. But in all these personally ruled countries the force of the military party is great. The Under Secretary here, who is the real F.O., pressed on me earnestly that we ought not to underrate the influence of personal feelings in sovereigns: and to avoid any language that might 'froisser' the Czar. They are earnestly for peace here—but their sympathies are Russian.

"In the course of my travels I have not succeeded in finding the friend of the Turk. He does not exist. Most believe his hour is come. Some few think it may be postponed. No one has even suggested the idea that he can be upheld for any length of time. I was not in the least prepared for such a consensus of opinion.

"I have everywhere held the language that any demand for occupation would be rejected at once. The probability of its being urged I regret to say increases."

But when on December 5 Lord Salisbury arrived at Constantinople, he found that in this forecast both he and the statesmen who had so unanimously agreed with it had been mistaken. It had been arranged that the representatives of the Christian Powers should meet in preliminary conference to agree—if they could—upon the scheme of reform to be subsequently presented to the Porte. Fundamental differences were expected at once to declare themselves,—but the expectation was falsified. General Ignatieff, the Russian ambassador, showed himself from the first markedly conciliatory. He agreed not to press the suggested occupation, asked only for such reforms, required only such guarantees, as were covered by Lord Salisbury's own instructions.

There were discussions as to the limits to be assigned to the new autonomy that was proposed for Bulgaria, —but they were in great contrast to the embittered controversy which centred round this point in '78. The Russian plenipotentiary was ready to abandon without serious resistance his plan for a single " big " Bulgaria,—consented to its division into two provinces, —consented to its frontier being thrown well back from the Egean seaboard. The other ambassadors had little to do but to acquiesce in the agreement of the two protagonists;—there was scarcely occasion for controversy at the meetings,—none for acrimonious debate. Lord Salisbury sought an explanation.

To Lord Derby, December 7, 1876.

" I have had several conversations with Ignatieff as well as with the others. . . . At present all is very smooth between us ; and if the same temper continues, an accommodation will be quite possible. I am puzzled by its smoothness—and naturally look for a snare. It may be he merely wishes to gain time. Or he may trust to the obstructiveness of the Turk —a very sure reliance, I fear. Or he may really wish for the diplomatic triumph of making peace. . . . Or again, the Russian Court may really find that a war is financially beyond its grasp.

" Calice,[1] with whom I had a long talk this morning, strongly confirms the view I expressed to you that, if forced to choose between Russia and Austria, Bismarck would choose Austria. Calice's tone does not satisfy me. He puts in disagreeable relief views at which Andrassy only hinted. Put brutally, I should thus describe the future as he would like to order it : (1) England takes the odium of breaking off the Conference. (2) Russia occupies Bulgaria. (3) Austria is consequently ' forced,' after a time, to

[1] Baron Calice, Chief of the Foreign Office at Vienna under Count Andrassy. He was at Constantinople as the special Austrian representative at the Conference.

occupy Bosnia. (4) She is also 'forced' to insist on an ultimate evacuation by both powers; but not until Russia has been weakened by an obstinate struggle with the Turk. (5) Consequently an estrangement (but in consequence of Russia's weakness, not a war) between Austria and Russia. (6) Consequently no danger of the military party realising their dream of attacking Germany with the help of Russia—the first result of which would be the fall of Count Andrassy.

"It may seem to you far-fetched, but it was a fair inference from Calice's conversation. Andrassy could not bring his Emperor—who is half gained by the military party—to do anything knowingly against Russia—but he would be glad, through us, to bring events about which would enable him to force the Emperor's hand."

Reports from Berlin presented Prince Bismarck as being both surprised and annoyed at the turn which affairs had taken at Constantinople. An amicable arrangement between the two men whose hostility he had assumed as axiomatic, suggested possibilities with which he had apparently not reckoned. Discontent was expressed also in another and less important quarter. The British colony in Pera, both official and unofficial, made no secret of its disapproval. Its distrust of Russia was absolute. Steeped in a tradition of conflict which had been unbroken for a generation, it looked upon General Ignatieff's readiness for concession as only one more example of the falsity inherent in him and in his nation. His individual methods, founded upon an exclusively oriental experience, were not calculated to remove this conviction. His intrigues and the success which attended them had become proverbial in Constantinople—the newly arrived plenipotentiary was regarded simply as his latest victim. Criticism was no doubt

accentuated by Lord Salisbury's refusal to be adequately shocked at his peculiarities. The General, who was a brilliant and fluent talker, adorned his conversation habitually with fictions so audaciously unconvincing as to become a constant source of amusement to Lord Salisbury. He found his society, indeed, a refreshing contrast to the monotonous correctitude of his more orthodox diplomatic associates. Even in their business relations it was difficult for him to take seriously the Russian's supreme indifference to western standards of conduct. As senior ambassador, General Ignatieff had charge of the map upon which the decisions of the plenipotentiaries were officially recorded. On one occasion, at a meeting of the preliminary Conference, Lord Salisbury discovered that a frontier line which had been accepted at the previous sitting and traced upon this map had in the interval been substantially altered in the direction desired by Russia. It is an embarrassing thing to charge a man with sharp practice to his face. Lord Salisbury pointed out the alteration and, with a feeling of irritated discomfort, prepared himself to receive as civilly as he could whatever improbable explanation might be offered. But the effort was not required of him. The implied accusation was not only recognised—it was accepted with the most perfect unconcern. A beaming smile,—a shrug of the shoulders,—and, "Monsieur le Marquis est si fin,—on ne peut rien lui cacher":—"Your Lordship is so quick, one can hide nothing from you":—that was all. The Englishman threw himself back in an uncontrollable burst of laughter in which both embarrassment and annoyance vanished.

The obstacle from which so much had been dreaded had been surmounted with ease, and within a fortnight the representatives of the Christian Powers

had unanimously agreed upon the terms to be presented to the Porte. They provided for limited autonomies in certain provinces and for administrative reforms elsewhere, with guarantees for their reality of which the principal were an international Commission of supervision and a gendarmerie officered by Europeans. But even before the full Conference met it became apparent that Lord Salisbury's fears had been justified and that it was from Turkish resistance that failure was to be looked for.

To Lord Derby, December 21, 1876.

"The attitude of the Turks is indeed tiresome enough for everybody. The objections they are taking to the proposals of the Powers are simply childish. If they said—your scheme diminishes the Sultan's power—or his revenue—or makes the Christian too nearly equal with the Mussulman—or deprives the Turks of the capital of a vested right in provincial good places,—all these things would have been intelligible. But all they say is, that a Commission would compromise their 'dignity.' It's like a street-sweeper complaining that he has been splashed. I hardly know what is pushing them to their present resistance. Probably the most potent cause is a belief that Russia is now weak. Some one is saying that to them whose interest lies in war. Andrassy has suddenly become more content with our terms. Is the conversion real? English fanatics are at work too. —— is residing in Stamboul—is incessantly occupied—and has never come near us. The talk runs that he professes to be the secret emissary of the Prime Minister. He can hardly be so impudent as that—but in whosoever's name he affects to talk, he is doing a deal of harm. I have not lost hope of pushing the Turks through—but it will be hard work.

"Chaudordy[1] is feverishly anxious for peace—

[1] Count Chaudordy, special representative of France at the Conference.

more so much than I am, who am pretty strong in that line. If France shows great anxiety in one direction it means that she believes another person is working in the other direction. I cast about for a cause for the Turkish resistance, for I cannot believe it to be spontaneous. But there is always one cause in operation—the belief that England will fight for them in the long run, and on this belief no amount of counter protestations appears to have the slightest operation."

This had become the crux of the situation in Lord Salisbury's eyes. If he had read indications aright, England was the only Power directly concerned who was whole-heartedly anxious for the Conference to succeed. It rested therefore exclusively upon England's representative to induce the Turks to submission, and for this task he found himself heavily handicapped. In after years he used to complain that he had been sent to do business at Constantinople without a purse to buy with or a sword to threaten with. The violence of the Bulgarian agitation had depreciated the value of England's friendship, while the pro-Turkish supporters of the Cabinet were never weary of proclaiming it as inalienable. The effect of this conflicting clamour was to persuade the Sultan and his Ministers that the British Government could neither engage a lasting support nor withhold an immediate one, and that therefore, from either point of view, its wishes might be disregarded with impunity. The pressing necessity was to convince them that at least the second half of this persuasion was a delusion, and that in the approaching crisis England's assistance would only be forthcoming if her advice were deferred to now. Verbal insistence to this effect had proved useless,—corroborative action was required. This was the conclusion which Lord

Salisbury now vainly tried to bring home to his colleagues in London.

Hitherto there had been little difference between them. The proposals to which he had agreed were covered by his instructions and Lord Derby reported that they had been unanimously approved of in Cabinet. To force them by any minatory pressure upon the Porte was, however, another question. Just after Lord Salisbury's arrival in Constantinople, he had received from Lord Beaconsfield two letters[1] proposing plans for dealing with the crisis which were more fanciful than practical. One was to trick Russia and Austria into acquiescing in what was to be, apparently, an indefinite occupation of the Balkan Peninsula by England—to their common exclusion; another was, in the event of Russia's invading Turkey, to remain at peace with her until, having fortified the Constantinople lines at British expense, sent our fleet into the Black Sea and prepared a *corps d'armée* ready for immediate expedition to the Bosphorus, it should please us—at our own time—to declare war. The permanent retention of a "commanding stronghold" in Turkey was to be our reward. In neither of these schemes was much regard paid to the Sultan's freedom of decision—his helpless acquiescence in our disposal of his sovereign rights was assumed. The day before writing the first of these letters,—on November 28,—the Prime Minister had, in fact, confided to Mr. Gathorne-Hardy his belief that, though not intended, partition would come.[2] It was an attitude showing very little change from that which he had occupied in September and at the beginning of October. But during the month of December a more zealous championship of Turkish independence

[1] November 29 and December 1, 1876; see *Life*, vol. vi. pp. 103-4.

[2] Gathorne-Hardy, *Memoir*, vol. i. p. 377.

developed. Lord Carnarvon, in writing to Lord Salisbury, notes the change without being able to explain it. It is possible that it was to be attributed to the revival of the anti-Turk agitation which was attempted in the middle of that month at a meeting summoned for the purpose in St. James's Hall. It was attended by many persons of distinction, but the violence of the language which they used and of the courses which they advocated did serious injury to their cause in public opinion. Lord Beaconsfield had always shown himself morbidly afraid of any apparent deference to the clamour of this movement, even when at the height of its influence, and, unfortunately, Lord Salisbury's request for leave to put pressure on the Porte was made barely a week after these intemperate demands for its immediate expulsion from Europe had been delivered.

A more permanent, though at this moment not more solid, obstacle in the way of effectual diplomacy lay in the Foreign Secretary's idiosyncrasies. His cool judgement, his clear perception of character and motives, the invincible logic of his reasoning, had secured and preserved to Lord Derby a high reputation in the administration of foreign affairs. But, as had been shown in the autumn, he failed inevitably before a critical decision. It was not only the hesitation of a normally irresolute man,—it was rather a steady aversion from any form of irretraceable advance. He could recognise with unerring sagacity the commitments which might involve such decisions and his fine intellectual powers were incessantly devoted to their avoidance. He was a master of the arts by which initiative in others is obstructed and definite conclusions are postponed;—knew how to ignore inconvenient suggestions without combating them, and the uses of silence in avoiding considera-

tion of unarrived emergencies. Lord Salisbury used to declare that contending with him in counsel was like fighting a feather bed—and yet the obstruction was never that of stupidity or incomprehension. This was the first time that the two men, though colleagues of many years' standing, had been brought into the close relation of personal collaboration, and the antagonism which inevitably developed between temperaments so opposed was destined to endure.

On December 22, Lord Salisbury wrote a long letter to the Prime Minister in which, after elaborately demonstrating that the scheme of reforms "to which this week you gave your consent" must operate eventually in the defeat of Russian designs, he reached its essential object in the concluding paragraph :

To Lord Beaconsfield, December 22, 1876.

"Whether I shall be able to make these stupid Turks accept this scheme I do not know. When the time comes (probably about a week hence), I shall urge upon you to allow me to make use of the strongest means of pressure. I am convinced that the terms furnish as strong a security against Russia as we are likely to obtain under any circumstances."

By the same mail went a hurried and more direct appeal to Lord Carnarvon for support to his wishes :

To Lord Carnarvon, December 22, 1876.

"A line—as my day closes—to express an earnest hope that you will strongly support and if possible get others to support any request I may have to make for powers to squeeze the Turk—I believe we have got out of Russia all that it is possible to get, being much better terms than I had ever expected. She *cannot* concede more without danger to the Emperor's position. At all events, I am convinced

she will not, and if these idiotic Turks refuse, war must come—they are refusing now—and about a week hence we must come to close quarters and win or fail. If we fail there is certain war—which cannot be localised. Every one will rush in for his share of the succession and quarrel over the spoil. So the moment is extremely critical. Ever yours in haste."

The Cabinet met the same day that these letters were written and, in receipt, no doubt, of telegraphic reports as to the attitude which the Turks had taken up, decided upon empowering their representative to exert moral pressure upon them, but unaccompanied by any threat of material force. If Lord Salisbury contemplated the latter when writing the letters just quoted it must have been only a passing thought. He argued exhaustively in the House of Lords after his return the difficulty of applying actual coercion at this juncture,[1] and he never pressed such action directly upon his colleagues. He reserved himself for a recommendation which came strictly within the limits which they had laid down.

On the 23rd the full Conference met. A change in the Turkish Ministry had occurred a few days previously. Midhat Pasha, the Young Turk leader, hitherto a subordinate though influential member of the Government, had become Grand Vizier. Sir Henry Elliot had a high opinion of him and expressed great confidence in the enlightened liberalism of his views. Lord Salisbury's judgement was not so favourable. There was a moment when among the multitude of unestablished rumours which filled Constantinople was one that affirmed a private understanding between Russia and Turkey. Lord Salisbury reported it with characteristic comment :

[1] Hansard, February 20, 1877.

" Midhat is fond of saying that Ignatieff has proposed to him a separate peace. Ignatieff is fond of saying that Midhat has proposed a separate peace to him. They are the biggest pair of liars to be found in Europe, but I am inclined (though with much diffidence) to think that Midhat is the falser of the two." [1]

The new Vizier's influence was certainly directed from the first towards encouraging resistance to Europe. Ruin might come through war, he declared, but ruin was preferable to acquiescence in such humiliating conditions as the Powers proposed. His first act was to introduce the Constitution which had been promised at the time of the new Sultan's accession, and it was duly promulgated on the same day that the Conference met. It was sterile for all practical issues, but it served its purpose as a protest against the assumption that Turkey could not initiate reforms on her own account. The first week of the Conference was spent by her representatives in unconcealed obstruction.

To Lord Derby, December 26, 1876.

" Matters are not looking well. The Turks are in private saying they will yield nothing and that war with Russia must be immediately expected. In public they are using every dodge to delay discussion of our proposals in Conference. I am trying very hard to make them understand that in no case will they have any assistance from England, but I do not know whether I shall succeed. There is a colony of English and Greeks, who make money by war contracts and who think that, by urging the Turks to stand out, they will force England to spend money here. Nor are they alone. Sir Henry Elliot of course behaves quite loyally, but that is not the case with his entourage or the embassy, and the Turk is

[1] To Lord Derby, December 29, 1876.

only too much disposed by his own practice to believe that official declarations are mere blinds and that the truth is only to be discovered by backstairs gossip."

Three days later he asked for the withdrawal of Sir Henry Elliot—a form of moral pressure coming well within the Cabinet's resolution.

To Lord Derby, December 29, 1876.

"Several of the minor diplomats, who see much of the game as spectators, assure me that the Turks are still convinced that, if there is war, England must be drawn into it on their side, and I hear this as much from Spain and Sweden, who are philo-Turk, as from Greece who is of the opposite persuasion. I get the same impression from many other quarters. The other ambassadors attribute this state of things in a great degree to the attitude and language of Sir Henry Elliot. Chaudordy, Werther, Corti and Zichy[1] have all separately urged me most earnestly to procure Sir Henry's absence as a most important addition to our chances of peace. I am of their opinion. I do not for a moment suggest any doubt of Sir Henry's loyalty. He is a thorough gentleman and means to act quite fairly. But he allows it to be seen that his sympathies are with the Turks, and against the proposals of the Powers.

"The telegram which he sent you home yesterday, and which he sent to me last night, illustrates his mode of proceeding. He states to you Midhat's arguments with an earnestness which shows that he agrees with him—as he admits in conversation that he does. It is evident that he said not one word to persuade Midhat to conform to the policy which has been sanctioned by the Government. I have no doubt that he let Midhat clearly see that he agreed with him. But then to pass by without any word of dissuasion a long and elaborate refusal of the Government's policy

[1] The German, Italian and Austrian Ambassadors at Constantinople.

is enough to make Midhat believe that England is not in earnest. This impression, unless it is removed, must lead to war.

"I wish you would let the Cabinet see this—because I think it fair that they should know in how false and difficult a position I stand. All that I can do is undone, effectively but unconsciously, by the man who is supposed to represent the views and wishes of the English Government. I had hoped that he was going home of his own accord. I fear he has given up this idea. I feel that, however disagreeable it is, I am bound to recommend the Cabinet on some pretext or other to get him away. It would be easy to tell him that in this very urgent crisis it was necessary that the Government should consult personally with him upon the state of affairs. The repeated suggestions of my colleagues (especially Chaudordy), and my own observation, convince me that negotiations for peace have not a fair chance unless you will take this measure."

It was characteristic of Lord Derby's methods that no allusion whatever to this earnestly worded appeal is to be found on his side of the correspondence, though after it had been communicated to the Cabinet, telegraphic acknowledgment of it was sent in their name. Lord Salisbury accompanied this letter by a telegram addressed to Lord Beaconsfield, urging briefly the same demand on the same grounds. It was refused, and the reason given is an interesting example of the reaction of representative institutions on the workings of diplomacy. General Ignatieff, whether from indiscretion or from malice, had just tendered similar advice to the British Cabinet. His message was delivered by Count Schouvaloff at the Foreign Office on the same day that Lord Salisbury's telegram was received. If Elliot were to be withdrawn, telegraphed Lord Beaconsfield, and Ignatieff's recommendation to that effect were to get out—

"and everything does get out at Constantinople"—"we should be turned out the first day of the session by our own men." (*January 1877.*)

Lord Carnarvon, whose sympathies were of course with his friend on the merits of the question, sent a message to the same effect. There was nothing for it but to yield, though Lord Salisbury continued to deplore the results of the decision in his letters home. The resistance of the Turks developed; they produced a counter-project which ignored every guarantee that Europe had demanded; the Powers, mainly at Lord Salisbury's suggestion, made a series of concessions, quite unavailingly. "Convincing the Turk," he wrote, "is about as easy a matter as making a donkey canter." (*January 4.*)

To Lord Carnarvon, January 5, 1877.

"Matters here go on slowly. I have not entirely lost hope, but it is evident that we have pressed the Russian to the utmost limit of concession; in fact, if he were to concede more of the little guarantee that is now asked, I should have to stop and decline to mix up England's name with a sham proceeding. His motive in all this I cannot divine for certain, but I fear it is that he feels certain of the Turks' obstinacy; and strong in that belief, is yielding enough to make it absolutely impossible that European opinion should be on his adversaries' side. The matter will probably be decided and telegraphed before you receive this. It is very unfortunate that Elliot is still here. All the rascally Levantines who stir up the Porte to hold out cluster round the Embassy. My power of negotiation with the Turks is almost *nil* so long as he stays."

When Lord Salisbury's letter of December 29 was read to the Cabinet ten days later, they appear to have felt hesitation. They sent a telegram noting

that his request had not since been repeated, and that as he seemed to think that the Conference was now on the verge of breaking up they thought it inexpedient to come to an immediate decision on the point. (*January 8.*) He replied that he had not pursued his recommendation because he did not feel such a certainty of its success as would have justified him in pressing it against the very cogent reason which the Prime Minister had given for his refusal. For the same reason he did not feel justified in pressing it now against the strong feeling of the Cabinet. Besides, it was too late.

Telegram to Lord Derby, January 9, 1877.

"Sir H. Elliot's unconscious attitude, still more the conduct and attitude of those around him, have done enormous evil, but it may not be reparable now. According to present appearances, I shall be forced before many days have passed to inform the Porte that unless our leading recommendations are accepted in principle, the further continuance of the Conference will be useless. Sir H. Elliot could hardly be sent for in time to have any influence on the decision of the Porte, without rapid proceeding which would be unjust to him, and would be open to misconstruction."

A letter written two days later to Lord Carnarvon gives one reason why he had not thought an uncompromising insistence on this issue worth while. After touching again upon the injury that had been done, he goes on :

To Lord Carnarvon, January 11, 1877.

"Perhaps, however, success was not possible even if Sir Henry had been away. Our influence here is at a very low ebb. They know that they have nothing

to fear from us ; and if they think they have anything to hope, they believe that our aid will not be conditional on their good conduct. The character of our ambassador has no doubt done something to ruin our influence, but the character of our policy has done more. I believe much of Lord Stratford's strength was due to the fact that Navarino was still fresh in Turkish memory.

" Apart from the question of immediate success, I think the Conference has done good. It has, I hope, made it impossible that we should spend any more English blood in sustaining the Turkish Empire. And I hope it will make English statesmen buckle to the task of devising some other means of securing the road to India."

Writing to Sir Louis Mallet on the same day, he referred, as he had done once before, to the Turks' belief that Russia did not mean to fight as a main inspiration of their attitude. In this letter he accepts the belief as well founded—a view held also by his colleagues at home at the time.[1] But subsequently he appears to have returned to his earlier conviction that it was mainly due to the suggestions of German intrigue.

To Sir Louis Mallet, January 11, 1877.

" Matters have got to a curious pass. Russia is precisely in the position of Bob Acres. Her valour is oozing out of the palms of her hands. She is making the most undignified struggles to be forced by the other Powers into abandoning the Christians and she is in despair because the other Powers have scruples. Meanwhile, the position of us, the other Powers, is getting exceedingly absurd ; for our only weapon in dealing with the Turks is a threat of the anger of Russia—and that is becoming so absurd that even the Turks see through it. Meanwhile Germany is

[1] *Life of Disraeli*, vol. vi. pp. 112-113.

playing the part of Sir Lucius O'Trigger and is assuring Russia there is very snug lying in the Abbey.

" Please keep the above to yourself—among other reasons because it may be a merely temporary phenomenon and Russia's warlike mood may return. Intrigues are going on between the three Imperial Courts at which I can only distantly guess by seeing the results. But, intermediately, the negotiations are tedious and the chances of operating on the incorrigible Turk are very small. I suppose matters must come to a crisis next week,—and I shall probably be released.

" Every day I am more convinced of the deplorable folly of the Crimean war."

Though the Conference was on its death-bed, it lingered on for another ten days. On the 15th, the Powers presented their last ultimatum, withdrawing all their demands but two. On the 20th, the Turkish representative announced a final refusal of these, and Lord Salisbury declared formally that " the mission of the Conference was ended and its existence could no further be prolonged." The evening before, he had written his farewell reflections home :

To Lord Carnarvon, January 19, 1877.

" The telegraph will have informed you that we have failed to make any impression on the obstinacy of the Turk. The terms have been reduced to the lowest possible point, consistent with the preservation of any guarantee ; and therefore their refusal must be interpreted as a disposal to escape from European tutelage altogether. On the whole I think that a belief in Russia's weakness has been the most potent encouragement to resistance, and, next to that, a belief (encouraged by many persons and writers and by sundry circumstances) that I do not really represent the Government of England."

To Lord Derby, January 19, 1877.

"Our business here is, I imagine, pretty well over. I think it is time we concluded. If any further negotiations are possible to prevent the outbreak of war they will have a better chance elsewhere. . . . Your future policy will require the gravest consideration. You will have to choose between (1) Helping to coerce; which would give you a voice in the ultimate disposal,—but that you will not do.

"(2) Allowing Russia to do her worst, and if she attacks and wins, coming in to regulate her demands when peace is talked of. This would be the easiest way, if practicable. But it is very possible that she may refuse to let you have your word at the end—and that you may have to content yourself with writing a pathetic despatch on the model of Lord Aberdeen's after the peace of Adrianople.

"(3) You may come to terms with Andrassy and Gortchakoff for a regulated occupation of Bulgaria and Bosnia; providing for evacuation after a certain date—and securing an indemnity to the occupying Powers out of the revenues of the provinces of which Bulgaria at least is very rich. This could only end in the creation of two tributary States, but I believe it to be the safest course. That the machine here can stand very long I believe to be impossible. Even if Russia does not invade it will crumble of itself; and the Russian Embassy has in its hands the threads of a vast network of intrigue, by which it can, if it will, aggravate enormously any natural causes of anarchy."

To Sir Louis Mallet, January 19, 1877.

"From a European point of view, I am disposed to doubt whether the failure of the Conference may not be an advantage, for we could only have plastered up the hole. But I am sorry for it from an Indian point of view, for I had had some communications with the Russians on the Central Asian question,

which I thought promised well. I was proceeding on these bases — abandonment of all claim to political influence in Kashgar—promise on both sides not to communicate without leave with Bockara on one hand or Cabul on the other—neutralisation of Merve with regulated system of chastisement of Turkomans when necessary, and lowering or abolition of tariffs along the Asiatic-Russian frontier. If a peace could have been made here, I think the Emperor would have been very anxious to make everything secure by settling all difficulties on our Indian frontier. But these inconvenient Turks have made any hope of this kind chimerical.

"I shall take advantage of Lord Carnarvon's kind offer—and come home slowly—for I am very tired. I write this in the belief I shall start Monday—which, unless there is any new surprise, I shall do."

It had been decided to mark the displeasure of Europe by a simultaneous withdrawal of all the plenipotentiaries on Monday the 22nd. The elements, however, did not favour this attempt at a dramatic conclusion. A storm of peculiar violence raged in the Bosphorus, and their wish for a diplomatic demonstration giving way to material alarms, the ambassadors one after another announced a postponement of departure. Lord Salisbury alone remained constant, and though himself a great sufferer from seasickness, insisted on embarking with his somewhat reluctant family and staff. The Austrian-Lloyd steamer which had been chartered for his conveyance put off from the shore, but her captain declined to proceed farther; and throughout the night the boat lay in the Bosphorus at the mercy of the tempest,—a by no means pleasant experience for her passengers.

CHAPTER V

THE EASTERN QUESTION, 1877

THE RUSSO-TURKISH WAR

Lord Salisbury travelled home slowly, resting for a few days at Naples on his way. There was little opportunity for rest when he reached England. Famine had appeared again in India, and arrears of work had to be made up in the midst of new and pressing departmental demands, while wider interests, upon which, both in the Cabinet and the country, he had now become a recognised authority, competed for his time and thoughts. International politics had gripped him with a hold never again to be loosened.

The newspapers which voiced the sentiments of the more warlike section of the Tory party had been denouncing him bitterly and, always too prone to expect misjudgement and opposition, he had anticipated a chilling reception on his return. His letters to Lady Salisbury, who had remained behind him for a few weeks' stay on the Riviera, show him perplexed if gratified at what he found. He was greeted at Cabinet "quite enthusiastically";—Lord Beaconsfield made him a little speech of welcome,—the Queen was "very civil." "At Dizzy's, in the evening, I did not find any hostility as far as I could judge, and they cheered me a good deal on coming into the Lords to-night. . . . Currie reports to me that Dizzy now says he wishes the Turks at the bottom of the Pro-

pontis. It is quite possible." (*February 6-8.*) He confessed himself puzzled; he could find "no clue to the mysteries of D.'s conduct"; nor recognise the whereabouts of the intrigues of whose existence he had been convinced. The state of opinion within the party was altogether less unfavourable to his views than he had assumed. A few days later he writes, after an interview with the Prince of Wales:

To Lady Salisbury, February 11, 1877.

"From what he said, I have very little doubt that the Turcophil party consists of his and the Duke of Sutherland's clique,—plus the military party and the anti-religious men. In Parliament it does not appear to be dangerously strong.

"Schou. came to me this evening earnestly pressing for some bridge on which the Russians might retreat—and entreating me not to put his Government off with phrases. I am not very sanguine of a bridge being found,—especially with Derby's dislike to pledge himself.

"Bismarck has made new proposals for an offensive and defensive alliance,—which have happily not been accepted."

The last paragraph must evidently not be read too literally. An entry of that day in Mr. Gathorne-Hardy's diary mentions a letter of Lord Odo Russell's read in Cabinet;—it reported "a conversation with Bismarck on Europe and alliances," and the comment is added, "How far was it sincere? There is no doubt that he has often expressed his desire for an English alliance."[1] But, whatever the German Chancellor's advances amounted to, Lord Salisbury was in no mood to hear of them graciously. Various indications of German activity in wrecking the Conference had left him filled with suspicions,—

[1] Gathorne-Hardy, *Memoir*, vol. ii. p. 15.

which were only gradually removed by the evidence which accumulated during the next three years of Prince Bismarck's genuine anxiety to restrict the conflagration which he had helped to ignite.

These suspicions are apparent in the references to European politics which are scattered through his weekly letters to his Viceroy,—now resumed. Without any partisanship for Turkey, Lord Lytton shared the dread of Russia and the wish to keep on good terms with the leading Mahommedan power of the world which were common to the majority of Anglo-Indian statesmen. There were rumours of fresh Russian intrigues in Afghanistan;—Lord Salisbury agrees with his correspondent in thinking them connected with what was passing in Europe.

To Lord Lytton, February 16, 1877.

"The Czar had been encouraged by Gladstone's abominable agitation to make that unlucky Moscow speech. As it was neither within our power, nor agreeable to our policy, to attempt single-handed another Crimean war, it became essential, if possible, to find him a bridge over which to retreat. He was willing enough—as the proceedings of the Conference showed. Unluckily the Turks, encouraged by fanatics from here, and intrigues from Berlin, imagined that Russia was paralysed—and refused in sheer bravado. Now the danger has revived; no bridge can be found; Alexander, bound by that speech, must go on; and he is only deliberating how to make his crusade as profitable and as inexpensive as possible. I greatly fear that Austria—professing all the time the warmest friendship for us—is outwitting us, and will induce Russia to turn her attack from that quarter which will save the Bulgarians, but will threaten her, to the quarter that only threatens us, and does the Bulgarians no good. In other words, the Russians will advance along the Asiatic and not

the European shore of the Black Sea. There is every probability that they will be successful, and there is quite a possibility that they may appear on the southern slopes of the Armenian mountains. In view of such a contingency they may think it judicious to keep your hands full, which a little trouble at Cabul will, they hope, do. This may account for their maintaining some cheap agitation at the Ameer's court. But I do not think any serious collision between us and Russia at all probable. She seems to me much too weak. She is formidable enough for Turkey, but even this Turkish war will be a very severe strain upon her in the opinion of the best authorities—including Moltke. Mined by revolution —on the very brink of bankruptcy—without one commander of any note, and having to contend even in the defence of her own frontiers against the difficulties of enormous distances and scanty population—she seems to me powerless for a distant blow. If any dangers threaten England, they are much nearer home, and will come from a far more formidable military power."

To Lord Lytton, March 2, 1877.

"The object most of all desirable is, if possible to keep Russia out of war for the present. If it can be done for twelve months more, France's preparations will be sufficiently complete to make a *coup de main* from Berlin impossible. Till that time the danger is serious. Nothing but the counterweight of Russia prevented it in 1875, and if that counterweight is removed, the policy or the terrors of Bismarck may again become uncontrollable. Of course the unreasonable disposition of the Turk, or rather the total disorganisation of his Government, is the difficulty. . . . The crisis is an anxious one, for it is quite conceivable that if things go wrong, we may be fighting for Holland before two years are out."

To Lord Lytton, March 9, 1877.

"I am not satisfied altogether with the policy that is being pursued, though I quite see that, in the present divided state of feeling here, no other is possible. But I should like to move a little faster. I feel convinced that the old policy—wise enough in its time—of defending English interests by sustaining the Ottoman dynasty has become impracticable, and I think that the time has come for defending English interests in a more direct way by some territorial re-arrangement. I fear that when we come to do the same thing some years later, one of two things will have happened. Either France will have recovered her position and be jealous of any extension of our power in the Mediterranean,—or Germany will have become a naval power. Either of these contingencies will make it difficult for us to provide ourselves with a *pied-à-terre*, in place of that which we shall infallibly lose at Constantinople. Arrangements which may be easy now will be impossible five years hence.

"But these are dreams. English policy is to float lazily downstream, occasionally putting out a diplomatic boat-hook to avoid collisions."

During the month of March Lord Salisbury appears to have been mainly engaged in Cabinet in fighting for the maintenance, as long as possible, of the solidarity of the Christian Powers, which had been the one beneficent achievement of the Conference. Russia had issued a note inviting them to join in a protocol of final remonstrance with Turkey on her rejection of their proposals. British participation was strongly deprecated in some quarters, both in Parliament and in the press. It was urged that, behind a mask of courteous diplomacy, Russia was scheming to secure European sanction for her intended

aggression ; England at least should refuse to be hoodwinked even at the cost of separating herself from the rest of Europe. The Cabinet hesitated, and Lord Salisbury wrote to urge upon his chief the peculiar danger of a policy of isolation at that moment. It was the danger upon which he had already dwelt to Lord Lytton and which a year later was to become close and threatening,—the reconciliation of Imperial rivalries at England's expense. Germany had already signified her adhesion to the Russian proposal.

To Lord Beaconsfield, March 12, 1877.

" If we reject the note, it is pretty clear the Czar must go to war. We shall then come before Parliament under these conditions. We shall be alone against the other five Powers. We shall have brought on a war by this isolation. And we shall have done this to avoid accepting a note which pledges us to hardly anything to which we are not already pledged, and which can at all events be plausibly described as a note of extreme moderation. . . . Schouvaloff tells me they have squared Vienna. I believe it—not so much because he tells me, but because I believe Andrassy to be for the present in Bismarck's pocket, and Bismarck's consent implies Andrassy's. But what does the assent of Vienna to a Turkish campaign mean ? It is ominous to England. It means that Russia will not threaten Constantinople, and will not permanently occupy Bulgaria. But the national feeling will insist on some territorial result.

" She can only find it on the side of Asia."

Russia would secure a large cession of territory in Asia,—embracing perhaps some commanding position on the Armenian hills,—dominating the Euphrates valley,—within easy approach of the head of the Persian Gulf. The existing state of public feeling in England would forbid a repetition of the Crimean

War, and as we should have separated ourselves from the rest of Europe, we should have lost all claim to consideration in the final settlement.

"This then would be the result of the policy of isolation which we should have to present to Parliament. We should have restored the alliance of the three Empires; established Russia on the Armenian hills; lost all hold on Turkey,—and got nothing whatever in compensation.

"For these reasons it seems to me vital to the ministry if we can manage it, to accept this protocol. Even if it involves some difficulties in the future, they are trivial compared to those which surround us now."

A week later he was writing again to India, "My impression still is that Berlin is the centre of the great European intrigue—and that Turkey is a mere accident; a spark that may inflame a combustible heap—but not in itself of much moment."

He got his way and England agreed to join with the other Powers in drawing up a protocol to give effect to the Russian proposal. The negotiations were carried on in London as the capital where agreement was subjected to the severest strain. Before they began the situation was complicated—from Lord Salisbury's personal point of view—by the appearance of General Ignatieff on the scene. He arrived in Paris on an undefined mission whose secrecy was its most published characteristic, and he wrote to propose himself for a visit to Hatfield. The effect which his peculiar presentment of Russian statecraft might have at that moment upon the minds of British politicians was not to be risked. Lord Salisbury took the bull by the horns and replied frankly that, great as would be his own pleasure in receiving his late colleague, his presence in England

at that juncture would not conduce to good relations between the two countries. The General protestingly submitted, and the visit was successfully postponed until March 17, after the acceptance of the Russian invitation had been decided on. When it did take place, Lord Salisbury saw reason to congratulate himself upon his breach of good manners. An incident which occurred at Hatfield was typical of others that occupied London gossip at the time and were illustrative of the dangers that beset Oriental diplomacy amid British surroundings. Among the company whom Lady Salisbury had invited to meet her Russian guests, and whom she had tried to make as widely representative as possible of English political society, were two Liberal statesmen—Lord Hartington, the then leader of the Opposition, and Mr. Forster, Lord Salisbury's old ally in his fight with the Education Department. On the day that the party broke up these gentlemen appeared together at the India Office, and reported to their late host a series of diplomatic confidences which General Ignatieff had made to them with the avowed object of arming them for an attack upon the Ministry in the House of Commons. "It did not seem quite the thing to be intriguing against a man in his own house," was the dry comment of the Englishmen, "so we have come to tell you what he said."

Lord Salisbury's thoughts during this spring were not occupied only with immediate negotiations. He had it on his mind at least to give his colleagues the refusal of a solution which would have involved a very active form of co-operation with the rest of Europe. Its nature had been indicated in certain words of warning which he had addressed to the Turkish Government at the conclusion of a speech

in the House of Lords on February 20. If peaceful persuasion, he said, should fail, the very considerations which had induced the European Powers to strain every nerve to avert war might lead them to declare that the question must now be settled once and for all, so that no further war should arise from it. In the course of that spring, according to his own subsequent account, he proposed to the Cabinet the abandonment of England's traditional policy and the substitution for it of a bold initiative in partition. The opportunity was apparent. By her deliberate rejection of the unanimous demand of the Christian Powers, solemnly registered at the Conference, Turkey had freed them from all obligations contracted towards herself in the Treaty of Paris ;—they remained bound only as towards each other. In speaking of this episode afterwards, he said nothing as to his having suggested any particular scheme of partition, nor as to the degree of control, between the limits of exclusive influence and actual annexation, which he would have assigned to the different Powers taking part in it. Such dependent issues were probably not discussed. The proposal never reached that stage. The Cabinet would not hear of it, and the Prime Minister repudiated it as immoral ;—a verdict which his colleague reported with a grimly ironic smile. But it would be a mistake to narrow the responsibility for its rejection. English public opinion at that moment would scarcely have tolerated it, and though, to judge from his detached utterances, it would have been supported by Prince Bismarck, it seems very doubtful whether either Austria or France would have given it their consent. Lord Salisbury himself admitted in retrospect that to have carried it through would have required a promptitude and energy in the conduct of our diplomacy which could not have been

looked for under its then direction. He does not seem to have pressed it, and could hardly have felt sanguine enough of its acceptance to have been seriously disappointed at its rejection. But he never swerved from the opinion that its adoption would have offered the best, if not the only, chance of rescuing Europe from a grave and permanent menace to her peace.[1]

The opportunity, such as it was, passed and did not recur. The Joint Protocol was signed in London on March 31. Its demands were rejected by the Porte, and on April 24 Russia declared war. The Cabinet, after some debate, had succeeded in agreeing upon the attitude which it would adopt in the presence of this expected event. Both the Crimean and the Partition policies had been excluded; one section of its members would take no action in support of Turkey,—another would not join in attacking her. A middle course was decided upon—neutrality, limited by the proclaimed intention of intervening wherever and whenever the interests of England herself should become affected. Lord Salisbury was not hopeful. "Of our foreign policy I say nothing," he writes to Lord Lytton on May 4, two days before this declaration of neutrality was published, "they fill me with sadness and apprehension. The system of never making a plan beyond the next move is bearing its natural fruits. I trust we may avoid any great disaster."

[1] In his verbal reminiscences Lord Salisbury did not specify the date of this episode further than as is stated in the text. A reference of Lord Beaconsfield's to a Cabinet held on March 23 [*Life*, vol. vi. p. 129] reads appropriately. The language seems too strong to be applied to a proposal for including Russian and Turkish disarmament in the London Protocol,—which was the only business actually under negotiation at the time: "Yesterday was the most important meeting of the Cabinet which has yet been holden, and I trust we shall never hear any more Bathism, Lyddonism (*sic*), really Gladstonism, within those walls."

Every public man has at times to take part in a policy which is not the one which he himself would have preferred, and, so far, this occasion was but one among many in the course of Lord Salisbury's career. But there were attendant circumstances which must have made the months that followed this Declaration of Neutrality among the least satisfactory of his official life. It was an axiom of his that, in foreign affairs, the choice of a policy is as a rule of less importance than the methods by which it is pursued. The balance of advantage as between alternative policies is often slender even in estimate, and it can seldom if ever be ensured. There are too many forces at work in international politics, they are too complex, the insurgence among them of new elements is too incalculable for accurate forecast to be possible. But whatever is the policy adopted, the evil wrought by any hesitation of purpose, any lack of vigour or sincerity in its pursuit is certain. Lord Salisbury was acutely sensible of the existence of such defects in the then direction of the Foreign Office. Yet for the remainder of that year he felt himself compelled, not only to tolerate, but at times to welcome them as safeguards against another and more pressing danger. Inertness and timidity in diplomacy might, and probably would, produce disaster in the near future ;—a war engaged upon inadequate grounds would have been disaster actually achieved. His correspondence shows how bitterly he felt the falseness of the position that resulted.

Whether, as a matter of fact, the second danger was as real as he believed it to be must remain a question for dispute. The Cabinet as a whole had acquiesced in the abandonment — at least for the time—of the Turkish alliance. It had accepted the view, strongly urged by himself and Lord Carnarvon,

and supported less emphatically by some of their other colleagues, that to champion Turkey while she was still defiant of European demands would be to bind upon England all the burden of her incompetence and misrule. The Cabinet had acquiesced,—but the sincerity of the Prime Minister's personal consent was dubious. The most noisy section among his followers were already clamouring for interference on the Sultan's behalf. The Queen's sympathies, biassed by Crimean memories, were strongly in the same direction. Apart from the influence which such pressure from above and below might be expected to exert upon Lord Beaconsfield's mind, there were indications both in his speeches and in his private conversation that no great pressure would be needed. Liberal politicians unhesitatingly and with conviction charged him with the intention of manœuvring England into a war in defence of Turkey. At a later period Lord Salisbury came to doubt whether there had been substantial grounds for the charge. But, at the time, both he and Lord Carnarvon unquestionably believed in it though with different degrees of conviction. It was not only that they recognised a difference of opinion between themselves and their chief; they assumed a deliberate purpose to circumvent them, an already engaged intrigue,—and in the light of this assumption every proposal that Lord Beaconsfield made became a source of new distrust to them, and every assurance that he gave them was suspect. The memory of '67 weighed heavily upon them both. They had known betrayal, and they dreaded a repetition of the experience.

Lord Carnarvon was from the first more strongly affected by these suspicions than his friend. A week before the London Protocol was signed he wrote to Lord Salisbury expressing his belief in an immediately

approaching crisis in the Cabinet. As a preliminary to plunging the country into a repetition of the Crimean War, Lord Beaconsfield was scheming to compel the resignation of the two friends. A phrase towards the close of the letter is suggestive of the recollections that were fundamentally responsible for these alarms: "It is strange to go through the same suspicions, anxieties, struggle, as we did ten years ago—and together!" (*March 25.*) Lord Salisbury doubted the possibility of such extreme courses.

To Lord Carnarvon, March 26, 1877.

"Your letter 'donne à penser.' But I find a difficulty in believing that B. contemplates any course so violent as you suggest. I admit that if he means war with Russia, it is his interest to get rid of us now rather than when the crisis comes. But he can only get rid of us in one of two ways. He must dismiss us; or he must pick a quarrel and provoke us to resign. The first supposition hardly seems to me possible. No Minister has dismissed a colleague in the Cabinet since Pitt dismissed Thurlow, and then the provocation was considerable because Thurlow spoke and voted against Government Bills in the House of Lords. Being an act of so unexampled a kind, some cause must be shown to the Queen, the colleagues, Parliament. But no cause could be even pretended except our prospective unwillingness to go to war with Russia. Assuming—which is a vast assumption—that such a motive would seem sufficient to the Queen and the colleagues—how would it look in Parliament? Why, the statement of it would blow up the whole plot. Whatever change may come when they see blood the people are in no humour for war at present. The avowal that the Prime Minister had broken up his Cabinet in order to be ready for war would create a terrible outburst of peace—atrocity—and commercial feeling which might well bring him to the ground. Perhaps he might not

give this reason. But he must give some reason and a cogent one for such a step. However, if he did not give this explanation we should; and that he knows full well. The other plan is to pick a quarrel. But it takes two to make a quarrel; and the opportunities for doing so in our case are not frequent. Nor, though he has courage enough, is he cold-blooded enough to maintain the resolution to pick a quarrel over any considerable space of time.

"We must be cautious till the crisis comes. There will be no need to interfere very conspicuously in foreign affairs for the present. We are rolling down the incline now; war between Russia and Turkey seems to me inevitable. I feel certain that none of our colleagues, except the two, have any notion of any peculiar difficulty or tension."

Three weeks later—just before the Russian declaration of war — Lord Salisbury wrote to report to his friend a conversation he had had with the Prime Minister.

To Lord Carnarvon, April 18, 1877.

"I ought to have written to you before,—a bad headache must be my excuse. The upshot of B.'s discourse was to point out that according to the best military advice, it would take nine weeks to march from the Pruth to Constantinople; and that it would take nearly that time for us to reach and entrench ourselves in the Dardanelles. He proposed therefore that we should at once ask the consent of the Turkish Government to our taking Gallipoli —promising to restore it at the end of the war. I objected to this proposal very strongly—insisting that such a course would be in effect an alliance with Turkey; that it would be so understood by the people of England, by Russia, and by Turkey herself; that it would take the Russians some time to reach the Balkan, and, that to reach Gallipoli with such artillery as would be formidable to us when there,

would take much longer than nine weeks; that there was no necessity for taking any action till Russia had passed the Balkan, or at least had shown an intention to pass it; that even if she did reach Constantinople we could shell her out of it with ease; and that by deferring our action till Russia had manifested a resolution to attack Constantinople, we should run no risk, and should clear ourselves from the suspicion of using our military force to maintain the Turk in Bulgaria. I added that I doubted Russia's intention to attack Constantinople; that I thought that a more probable contingency was that, having beaten the Turk in Bulgaria, she would conclude a favourable treaty with him. In that case, I said, as such a treaty must involve some infraction of the Treaty of Paris, you will be entirely at liberty to take such a course as you may think necessary for England's interest. But he was not at all satisfied with this idea—and used some phrases indicating an intention to assist the Sultan to maintain his position in Bulgaria. This, of course, is his real intention. But he told me that Derby was equally anxious for delay—so I have not much fear for the result. He was very earnest about the matter. I was with him for an hour—and when he saw he could make no impression on me, he was almost rude. Of this I took no notice, and left him. I shall be at the House to-morrow."

The confidence here expressed in the obstructive powers of the Foreign Secretary was typical of one aspect of Lord Salisbury's attitude during this period. The consternation with which they simultaneously filled him was exemplified in two notes interchanged between the same friends a month later. In the course of negotiations which had been initiated with Austria, the Cabinet had arranged with Lord Derby to intimate formally to her ambassador their readiness to undertake the transport of Austrian troops

to Gallipoli or Constantinople if and when the moment for action should arrive. Lord Carnarvon discovered that this communication had never been made—that Lord Derby had confined himself in his interview with the ambassador to the vaguest generalities of a desired co-operation—and he wrote to impart his discovery to Lord Salisbury. "It is really despairing for it shows that, whatever may be the decision in the Cabinet, it is always liable to be upset afterwards. . . . The transport was essential—and anyhow it was an understanding." (*May* 23.)

The reply was briefly bitter:

"It is, as you say, quite despairing. It seems to me we must give up all hope of any *positive* action on the foreign policy. We may prevent evil, but we can do no more. The result will be an emasculate, purposeless vacillation, which will be very discreditable. But perhaps it is what suits the nation best." (*May* 27.)

The despatch of May 6, which proclaimed England's neutrality, specified four directions in which her interests might become involved and her neutrality therefore imperilled. She would be sensitive as to any action affecting the position of the Suez Canal,—the shores of the Persian Gulf,—the possession of Constantinople,—or the regulations by which the navigation of the Straits was controlled. In that generation the conviction was almost universal that for Constantinople or the Straits to pass into the hands of Russia would be a disaster for the British Empire. It would provide her in the Black Sea with a naval base of unlimited capacity which could easily be made impregnable and which in those days, when England occupied no position in the Mediterranean east of Malta, would command her communi-

cations with India. A letter written to Lord Lytton while the declaration of neutrality was still under consideration shows that, though Lord Salisbury agreed as to the necessity of respecting this opinion —held as it was as strongly in Asia as in Europe— he did not altogether share it.

To Lord Lytton, April 27, 1877.

"I cannot go very far with those who dread the Russians. Except the size of the patch they occupy on the map, there is nothing about their history or their actual condition to explain the abject terror which deprives so many Anglo-Indians and so many of our military party here of their natural sleep. Except in conflict with barbarous Orientals —or the Poles, who were little better—their military history has been one long record of defeat. Their only trophies have been the repulse, on two occasions, of civilised invaders, after a long course of victories had brought them to the heart of the Empire—at Moscow and Pultowa. Their naval history simply does not exist. Their finances, never good, are now desperate ; their social condition is a prolonged crisis threatening, at any moment of weakness, socialist revolution. Their people are unwarlike,—their officials corrupt,—their rulers only competent when borrowed from Germany. Maritime population they have practically none. And yet we are asked to believe that their presence in the Black Sea or the Bosphorus would be a serious menace to England in the Mediterranean where she is already elbowed by France, Italy, Austria and Greece. We shall have, probably, to defend Constantinople, if attacked, for reasons of prestige which those who govern Oriental nations cannot afford to overlook. But the grounds which are usually assigned for such a policy appear to me wholly untenable. To make a maritime power, something more is wanted than a good port. Men and money are required ; and Russia has got neither."

To Lord Lytton, May 18, 1877.

" We have written formally to Russia in the sense of Cross's speech in the late debate which you will no doubt have read before this. Practically, we say that we must stand by Constantinople, but we do not care about anything else ; for the Suez Canal, and Egypt and the Persian Gulf,—though we mention them—are not likely to be the object of attack in the present war at least. I do not know what answer we shall receive from Russia : the probability, I think, is that it will be favourable. If not, we shall do our utmost to obtain the co-operation of Austria in defending Constantinople ; and if we succeed in doing so, the chance of Russia defying the combination is very small indeed. Of course, if we fail diplomatically, we shall have to undertake the task ourselves."

On June 8 the Russian Government sent its reply. It repudiated any intention of acquiring Constantinople but refused to pledge itself against a temporary occupation. It further intimated the terms upon which peace might now be obtained if it were solicited by Turkey. They included the cession of Bessarabia and Batoum ; the independence of the actually autonomous principalities ; and a new autonomy to be created for Bulgaria. This, in the first communication received, was to extend only to the Balkans, but a hasty telegraphic correction, significant of the conflicting influences at work in the Czar's Government, withdrew this limitation and left the extent of the proposed autonomy undefined.

Throughout June and July, while the Russian armies were advancing victoriously southward, the Cabinet met in repeated and prolonged debate. Scattered references indicate the lines along which opinion was divided. The Prime Minister, with

Lord Cairns as his most powerful supporter, persevered in pressing for active measures to be taken; the Foreign Secretary remained resolute in passivity; Lord Salisbury, resting on this constant support, and backed by Lord Carnarvon and at times by other of his colleagues, found it easier to prevent action to which he objected than to promote that which he wished for. Gallipoli was not occupied; Russia's rather dubious assurances as to Constantinople were not met by an ultimatum; he succeeded, in conjunction with other colleagues, in stopping an appeal to the House of Commons to grant a war vote of credit before it was prorogued. The only action in which he appears to have supported his chief was in a proposal for strengthening the garrison at Malta. "It will make the Russians hesitate without making the Turks unreasonable" (*July* 18). On the other hand, he could do nothing to give wholeness or positive purpose to the Government's policy or to undo the evil caused by the hesitations of its divided counsels. Lord Lytton, who was a strong advocate for immediate intervention, wrote to urge that the real danger lay in Russia's gaining control over the Government of Turkey, which could not be averted by merely excluding her from Constantinople. It was the one upon which, later, Lord Salisbury concentrated his efforts and he was already fully alive to it.

To Lord Lytton, May 25, 1877.

"Your anticipations as to the results of the Russian war in Europe are, I fear, likely to prove correct. It is more probable to my mind, and always has been, that the Turks will become a vassal state to Russia than that they will be driven out of Europe. The causes which have brought us to this position will be a curious study to the historian. It

is obvious it could only have been averted by a very decided policy in one direction or the other. If a state is so weak that it is likely to become the vassal of a neighbour, the catastrophe can only be averted either by making it strong—or by destroying it. The former policy was barred by the state of feeling here—by the feebleness of Turkey—by the want of a military ally—by the certainty that the process could not be done once for all, but that Turkey would require to be kept upright by a constant and costly process of nursing. The other policy was practicable though harsh — but it was not adopted.

"The commonest error in politics is sticking to the carcasses of dead policies. When a mast falls overboard, you do not try to save a rope here and a spar there, in memory of their former utility; you cut away the hamper altogether. And it should be the same with a policy. But it is not so. We cling to the shred of an old policy after it has been torn to pieces; and to the shadow of the shred after the rag itself has been torn away.

"And therefore it is that we are now in perplexity."

To Lord Lytton, June 15, 1877.

"Our foreign policy has lacked a bold initiative and a settled plan. Too many different people have pulled successively at the strings. On your view that Turkey is still sustainable and that Russia is the real danger of the future, the old Crimean policy should have been clearly avowed and followed from the first. The view which, after two years' study of the subject, commends itself as the true one to my mind differs from this. The Russian power appears to me feeble, and I do not think any protection could have set the Turk upon his legs again. This may be wrong—but at least the resulting policy would have furnished a satisfactory solution of the question. I would have devoted my whole efforts to securing the

waterway to India—by the acquisition of Egypt or of Crete, and would in no way have discouraged the obliteration of Turkey. But the worst of our policy has been that it has not been a consistent whole on either side. A bit of each train of thought has been embedded in it, surrounded by a thick mass of general inertia."

There was one positive course of action upon which the Cabinet had been able to agree. It was decided to seek at once a closer understanding with Austria, and, in spite of his earlier criticism of this policy and the suspicions which he entertained of the intentions of the Central Powers, Lord Salisbury appears to have fully supported this decision. It was a necessary corollary to estrangement from Russia if the menace of the Drei-Kaiser-Bund was to be averted, and, in his own case at least, there was to be no "clinging to the shreds" of a rejected policy. An exchange of views took place. The Austrian Government declared itself unshakably resolved upon maintaining the right of Europe to consultation in the final settlement. Also upon forbidding the erection under Russian control of any Slav State dominating the Balkan peninsula. In this connection Count Andrassy insisted upon the necessity of averting a prolonged occupation by Russian troops. So long as the new autonomy was left from the first to develop independently, he would feel less anxiety as to its creation. "History," he remarked, with undeniable prescience, "is filled with examples of the ingratitude of peoples." As regarded any prospect of active co-operation, his attitude, however, was dubious. He was prodigal of sympathetic assurances and of encouragement to England to take action. But he would allow none of it to be published. When pressed for definite commit-

ments, his retort was obvious in the uncertain note which England herself was sounding. The reticences of her Foreign Minister were not calculated to remove the impression produced by her divisions—notorious in the press and Parliament and freely suspected in the Cabinet. The two Governments at length agreed to affirm the solidarity of their interests and to leave to a more convenient season the decision as to how they should be defended.

An unexpected turn in the course of the war made this conclusion less impotent than it would have appeared a few weeks earlier. After some preparatory delays, the Russian troops had crossed the Danube in the third week of June. The advance of their army in Asia was impeded by the failure of their transport organisation, though they reached and invested Kars. But in Europe their onward rush was irresistible. Northern Bulgaria was rapidly overrun and by the middle of July the vanguard of the army had appeared south of the Balkans. News of the invaders was daily expected from Adrianople. In the Turkish capital Ministers gave themselves up to panic and Mr. Layard—who had replaced Sir Henry Elliot as ambassador in the previous spring —talked of a probable massacre of the Christian population and clamoured for the instant occupation of Gallipoli by British troops. But the crisis passed almost before it had been realised. The Russians had outstripped their real capacity for advance; checks were suffered nearly simultaneously at several different points, and by the end of July, the reaction was complete. A Turkish victory in Asia raised the siege of Kars, and in Europe the Russian advanced guard, which had already crossed the Balkans, was defeated and forced to retire. Meanwhile, a body of Turkish troops under Osman Pasha — a hitherto

unknown officer in the Ottoman service—was threatening the western flank of the invaders north of the mountains. An army corps was detached to deal with them and was defeated at Plevna on the 10th July. Osman Pasha entrenched himself—repelled one assault after another with heavy loss to the attacking forces, and, through a notable defence, succeeded in holding up the entire Russian advance for nearly five months. The anticipated nine weeks' march from the Pruth to the Bosphorus had become a mocking memory, and the diplomats of Europe separated for their summer holidays with easy consciences. Feeling in England shared in the general relaxation; the "imminent peril" of the Russian advance on Constantinople could no longer be appealed to and the war agitation died down. On August 3, Lord Salisbury was able to report: "I never saw the English people look so peaceful. Even those who are known in their hearts to wish for war find it necessary to preface every argument with an expression of their devotion to neutrality." [1] The Opposition refused to support Mr. Gladstone in a resolution favouring active co-operation with Russia, and Lord Hartington, its official leader, practically accepted the policy of limited neutrality laid down in the May despatch.

Lord Salisbury sent Lord Lytton a summary of the situation as it appeared at the close of the session.

To Lord Lytton, July 25, 1877.

"Our position has not been sufficiently defined, and the course of the Government has not been clearly enough determined to enable me up to this time to give you any precise information concerning it. For many reasons which are not conveniently stated in a

[1] To Lord Lytton.

letter, it is not our custom to look many moves ahead, nor have we at present departed widely from our rule. But some points are clearer than they were.

" Austria after some negotiations has stated her determination not to permit Russia to acquire territory south of Constantinople—or to set up a Principality in Bulgaria under Russian influence—or to stay in Constantinople ; and to make any refusal of these points on the part of Russia a *casus belli*. But she refuses to interfere in the war till the Turks have submitted, even if it should involve the *entry* into Constantinople of the Russians.

" We have also assurances, whatever they may be worth, from the Russians that they do not intend to retain Constantinople. On this state of facts we have come to the resolution that the necessity for military action on our part will not arise till the Russians show signs of breaking this engagement. The difference in such an enterprise between acting with Austria and acting alone is so large that it outweighs considerably the evils attaching to a temporary occupation of Constantinople. At the same time, though Austria's promises are very distinct, they may possibly not be kept. In that case, if the Cabinet remains of the same opinion as that which it at present holds, war with Russia will follow any attempt on her part to establish herself permanently at Constantinople. If Austria is true to her promise, no war will take place : because Russia's position will be so hopeless that she must give way. War, therefore, is not at all a probable contingency : but I thought it better to give you this short sketch of our position, as if war does break out, your Government will of course be a principal actor in it. . . .

" I think that such a policy would be the necessary corollary of our language held both in despatches and in the House of Commons : and therefore, if the nation sustains us, it must in such a case be pursued. But, as you know, I do not myself look

on war with Russia as the best way of meeting the disadvantages, whatever they may be, which would result from her possession of Constantinople. But I will not dwell upon that part of the question any more as I gather from your letter of 25th June that you hold us to be bound, in consequence of our past action, to the Turks,—an obligation from which it seems to me that they have relieved us by declining on several occasions to follow our advice. But the question is not worth pursuing further. It is quite clear that the possession by Russia of Constantinople, if in no way counterbalanced, is likely to be a heavy blow to this country, and a war with Russia is the only mode of averting it on which the Cabinet are likely to agree."

The contingency referred to had become indefinitely postponed before this letter reached its destination. But the following winter Lord Salisbury referred to the month of July as the time when he had first felt doubts as to whether the agreement between himself and Lord Carnarvon upon foreign policy would be likely to continue. The standpoint shown here would account for the feeling. The decision which, six months later, the public attributed to a sudden conversion had already been taken. The policy which the two friends had favoured, and which Lord Salisbury still admittedly preferred, had been finally abandoned by him as impracticable—its discussion "not worth pursuing further"—and its alternative accepted. It remained only for the occasion to present itself for that acceptance to become operative.

One other allusion to European politics is to be noted in Lord Salisbury's Indian correspondence of this year. Sir Henry Rawlinson had reported to Lord Lytton that there was reason to believe that the Government were determined to keep on friendly

terms with Russia because they considered Germany "as by far the most dangerous foe to England." Lord Lytton, recalling some phrases in Lord Salisbury's earlier letters, assumed an intention of forming an Anglo-Russian alliance against Germany, and wrote earnestly to deprecate such a policy.

To Lord Lytton, September 4, 1877.

"Sir Henry Rawlinson mixes a good deal in political society, in which a great deal of gossip, true and false, is to be picked up: and perhaps he is not always successful in distinguishing the wheat from the tares. In the present case he has discovered an expectation on our part of assistance from Russia which has certainly never existed. It is obvious that in the temper of the two peoples, and the bitter hatred which has grown up on each side during the last twenty or thirty years, there is an obstacle to an alliance which would be fatal, even if it were likely on other grounds that Russia would care to quarrel with Germany. I am inclined to agree with the estimate Sir Henry entertains, or reports, of the relative importance to us of danger from Russia and from Germany: but we are strong enough to take care of ourselves without alliances—if only we do not waste our force on matters which do not concern us. But what the Cabinet thinks about the designs of Germany I do not know—and I doubt if Sir Henry does. I have never heard the question discussed there."

It was not only as a member of the Cabinet that Lord Salisbury was concerned with the Eastern Question. The calm of his own department was seriously disturbed by it. Lord Lawrence's disciples were in a majority upon his Home Council, while their opponents were now dominant in Calcutta. His policy in Khelat and Afghanistan had been on the

whole in accordance with the views of this "forward" party, but in connection with the present crisis they had become anxious for developments to which he refused to consent. They were but little concerned with its European aspect. They saw Russia in the light of her threatening advance in Central Asia,—of her diplomatic activities in Cabul,—of the growing rivalry of prestige with England which she was establishing throughout the East. Noting the rapidity of her recent progress,—crediting her in advance with the increase in reputation and influence which a victory over Turkey would secure to her, they argued with depressing logic the imminence of the long-expected attack upon India. It might not fall at once upon India itself, but the protective independence of the frontier States was in actual peril.

In May it was rumoured that Russia had already taken advantage of the situation once again to push forward her Central Asian frontier, and Lord Lytton's military advisers urged immediate action.

To Lord Lytton, June 1, 1877.

"I am wholly unable to follow the reasoning on which their counsel is based. If Erzerum or Kizil Arvat belonged directly or indirectly to us, I could understand fighting for them. But in themselves nobody pretends that it matters to us whether they are held by Hottentots or Esquimaux. Their only importance is that from them Russia may come nearer us. But will the possession of them make it easier to the Russians to come nearer us? Or will this increased facility, if any, be worth averting at the cost of two hundred millions of money—and men in proportion? At all events I have never seen any attempt to estimate in detail the value of the strategic advantages of which the price is set so high that it is

thought expedient to prefer the cost of a gigantic war. *Semper dolosus versatur in generalibus*—and in this case *miles* may be substituted for *dolosus*, which is not an ordinary synonym."

To Lord Lytton, June 15, 1877.

"As to our foreign policy—I hardly dare to open the subject with you. If I took your gloomy view I should commence immediate enquiries as to the most painless form of suicide. But I think you listen too much to the soldiers. No lesson seems to be so deeply inculcated by the experience of life as that you never should trust experts. If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome: if you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent: if you believe the soldiers, nothing is safe. They all require to have their strong wine diluted by a very large admixture of insipid common sense."

A week later he wrote at considerable length upon the whole question of military policy in Central Asia. He repudiated any "amiable" delusions as to Russia's attitude. "'Let those take who have the power; let those keep who can,'—is practically the only rule of her policy—wherein, I am bound to add, she does not differ widely from many other civilised States." In that connection his only criticism is that the Viceroy's advisers are foreshortening the vista of the future and "crowding up into the next few years—or less—events which will take a generation to complete." But admitting the Russians to be advancing and that their advance must be stopped somewhere, what course was it wisest to pursue? Threatening messages sent to St. Petersburg from the London Foreign Office were a waste of time and paper. They could effect nothing unbacked by an appeal to force, and he argues at length that in Europe Russia was unassailable by England. A

casus belli as far as Europe was concerned would merely mean a "*casus itineris* for Schouvaloff." Effective action could only be taken in Asia itself. A line might be fixed upon there, approach to which by Russia would be a signal for attack. Was it suggested that it should be drawn at Kizil Arvat or even at Merv? The risk and cost of attack at such a distance from our base and through such a country were dwelt upon. "The suggestion seems to me visionary." The line must be drawn much nearer home. "Directly real danger is discernible on the horizon, Candahar ought to be in our hands. The awkward result of the Lawrentian policy is that we may, at the moment when it suits us least, have to deal both with the Amir and the Russian." He discusses and dismisses — with some indignation — an intermediate plan which had been suggested for inciting the Turcoman tribes and Afghans to attack Russia independently, and, reverting to the demand for immediate action, concludes:

To Lord Lytton, June 22, 1877.

"I am convinced it would be repeating the blunder committed by Leslie's soldiers at Dunbar—when in their enthusiasm they insisted on running down and meeting Cromwell on the plain, instead of waiting for him on the heights. Soldiers are dangerous advisers as to a military policy—though I believe in the particular instance I am quoting the clergy were the sinners."

To Lord Lytton, July 6, 1877.

"The Russians are rather vindicating my view that they are not such terrible fellows after all. The campaign in Armenia appears to have been a singular tissue of blunders — which are referable chiefly to an ingrained incapacity for closely organised

action. They can adopt the outside of the German system, but they cannot borrow the spirit which works it. Their irregular cavalry—the Cossacks—are unsurpassed; but when they have to show the qualities of civilised warfare—the capacity to supply large armies at great distances—and to handle them in difficult countries, you see that you will not have to scratch very far in order to touch the Tartar. India may lay aside her terrors for the present. . . . I think we are justified in hoping for two good results from the war: first, that we shall have done with our impossible Turkish client: second, that Russia's financial exhaustion will be so extreme as to bring about at an early date a political revolution, which must paralyse her offensive power for an indefinite period."

The anxieties which Lord Salisbury was endeavouring to calm in India were shared by a considerable number of people in England. They were felt by a serious body of opinion which would have been unaffected by irresponsible appeals to national vanity or prejudice. Lord Salisbury was all the more solicitous to allay them. On June 11, an opportunity offered in a debate raised on the subject in the House of Lords. In answering for the Government, he deprecated the urgency which was attributed to the danger,—it was one "which might possibly interest a future generation of statesmen." The distances still to be traversed by the Russian Army in Central Asia, as well as the obstacles to be overcome, were immense. Then, with that air of meditative detachment which characterised him on such occasions, he went on:

"I cannot help thinking that, in discussions of this kind, a great deal of misapprehension arises from the popular use of maps on a small scale. As with such maps you are able to put a thumb on India and a

finger on Russia, some persons at once think that the political situation is alarming and that India must be looked to. If the noble Lord would use a larger map—say, one on the scale of the Ordnance Map of England—he would find that the distance between Russia and British India is not to be measured by the finger and thumb but by a rule." (*Hansard, June 11, 1877.*)

The illustration "caught on"—all the more probably because of some indignant strictures upon its flippancy and recklessness. A recommendation to the study of "large maps" became a familiar retort to warnings of danger upon the frontiers of the Empire, and later on the phrase was more than once quoted against Lord Salisbury himself. The incident was typical of others in his career when the unconventional audacity of some comparison or suggestion gave it a life of its own outside its immediate application. Lord Salisbury was quite unmoved by the charge of indiscretion which such utterances brought upon him from timid followers. So long as the incriminated phrase achieved his present purpose; so long as it brought home to the public some truth which it was needful for them to realise, his opponents were welcome to any rhetorical assistance they might subsequently derive from it. On this occasion his words accurately expressed the distinction between the immediate and the distant, which was what he was anxious to enforce,—besides leaving a touch of enduring ridicule upon what might have become a dangerously disturbing appeal to popular fears.

This speech was followed by another, four days later, similarly inspired, and giving a very cautious and non-committal account of the Government's Afghan policy. A few weeks later a remonstrance at what these utterances had contained,—or rather, at

what they had omitted,—was received from the Viceroy. Lord Salisbury declined to discuss in detail speeches "of which I have no copy by me and only a very imperfect recollection." But he offered a sound general comment on the class of criticism conveyed.

To Lord Lytton, August 14, 1877.

"Inferences from speeches — especially negative inferences—in respect to foreign policy are seldom reliable. Even if I had been of opinion that it was desirable sooner or later to annex Herat, I should hardly have announced the view to the Amir, the Czar and the Shah through the medium of the House of Lords."

Meanwhile the alarms of official India had crystallised into an active opposition to the policy of the Home Government. The Governor-General's Council unanimously agreed upon a despatch pressing for immediate action in Central Asia, and in his private letters Lord Lytton urgently supported their demand. He dwelt on the reality and gravity of the evils apprehended, on the unanimity of expert opinion on the spot, and on the very serious responsibility which his chief would incur by ignoring it. Fear of responsibility was a phrase without meaning to Lord Salisbury's mentality. His only reply was a definite tightening of the reins of authority,—a more precise and trenchantly worded insistence upon acquiescence in his policy. He suspected the soldiers of trying to force his hand, noted the preparations that were being made, and begged the Viceroy to see to it that "the muskets do not go off of themselves." (*Aug. 3.*) "In the present excited state of the military mind it is of the first importance not to leave the military men the chance of becoming practically the arbiters

whether there should be peace or war." In another letter he pointed out that the feelings which were dominant at Simla differed absolutely from those which prevailed in London. "Whichever is abstractedly right, the English feeling—by which I do not mean mob and press, but the feeling of Parliament and Government—must govern. . . . At all events I hope you will not stir a soldier beyond the frontier (treating Khelat as within it) without obtaining our view on the matter first." (*Aug. 10.*)

On August 14 he announced a despatch conveying the Cabinet's formal reply to that sent by the Governor-General's Council. It was agreed to send a secret mission of enquiry into Turcoman territory,—but armed intervention of any kind, actual or vicarious, was prohibited; and the Indian Government was invited to concentrate its energies upon an active diplomacy in Afghanistan.

To Lord Lytton, August 14, 1877.

"The Russians are not now moving from the Caspian—and therefore an enquiry as to what we should do if they came to Merv is not of immediate interest. We have told the Russian Government that, if they do so, we must make a corresponding advance. It must be, I imagine, either to Candahar or to Herat. The Cabinet seemed to lean to Herat: but no decision seemed to be required on that point, and none was taken. If my view is correct, that you have time, you will probably by then have acquired sufficient influence in Afghanistan to enable us to take such a step amicably as far as the Amir is concerned."

Lord Salisbury's troubles were not only with his warlike advisers in India. The fierce partisanship of the time had invaded his department at home and

produced from the opposite point of view an excited resistance to certain items of his policy. He comments upon it with touches of characteristic irony. The two measures objected to were the occupation of Quetta, which had formed part of the previous year's treaty with Khelat, and the separation of the trans-Indus province from the Government of the Punjaub, which was intended to bring frontier questions more directly under the Viceroy's control. Both were regarded as dangerous concessions to the "forward" party.

To Lord Lytton, June 22, 1877.

"I shall have a deal of trouble with the Lawrentians of my Council as to Quetta,—and still more as to the trans-Indus Province. I will fight my hardest; and, if I am supported by the Cabinet, will, in case of need, overrule them."

To Lord Lytton, July 6, 1877.

"The hostility against the frontier minute increases more and more in the office. It commits in an aggravated form the crime of lesé Punjaub. For this reason we shall have a great many Lawrentian sermons preached against us in the course of the next few weeks. . . . Opinion here has been quite incapacitated for the decision of such questions by the violent controversies which have taken place on the Eastern question. You must be in one camp or the other; you must either disbelieve altogether in the existence of the Russians or you must believe that they will be at Candahar next year. Public opinion recognises no middle holding ground."

To Lord Lytton, July 13, 1877.

"The Council are getting wilder and wilder about the North-West frontier question. They favour me with interviews on the subject,—and positively stamp about the room."

To Lord Lytton, September 4, 1877.

"In the present temper of politicians here, and especially of the retired Anglo-Indians, to whose voice English opinion listens with profoundest deference, your whole proceedings on the North-Western frontier crave wary walking. The whole Indian world here is divided into Quettites and Anti-Quettites—who hate each other with all the fervour of Big Endians and Little Endians—and at present the Quettites are much in the minority."

To Lord Lytton, October 4, 1877.

"I wish matters could have been settled more rapidly and more to your taste. But the times are not propitious. Lord Lawrence occupies the same position in the Anglo-Indian world which a month ago Thiers occupied in France,—the shadow of a great name under which a motley assemblage of wild follies and respectable truisms are trustfully lying down together."

To Lord Lytton, October 25, 1877.

"As to Quetta—we must proceed with caution. If I had foreseen the complications which the Russian war would produce, and the violent cyclones of warlike and anti-warlike sentiment arising from it, I should have advised you to locate your Khelat escort at some place not far from Quetta—but which was not Quetta. It is a name to conjure with,—and its precise virtue is to make respectable elderly gentlemen go very mad."

In October, the hopes of Turkish sympathisers reached their highest point. The Russian armies had not yet crossed the Balkans. Plevna and Kars still held out. Militarist counsellors were at a discount in St. Petersburg, while the Sultan's Ministers were discussing what satisfaction in the shape of

fortresses and territory they should exact from a defeated Russia. Lord Beaconsfield summoned a Cabinet on October 5. He urged that the moment had come for intervention,—that the Sultan should be invited to agree to certain terms of peace on the understanding that, if Russia rejected them, England would abandon her neutrality and come to his assistance. He wrote beforehand to try and persuade his Indian Secretary to a support of this proposal,—but without success. Lord Salisbury, who had been brought back from Puys to attend this Cabinet, reported its result in a letter to his wife, in which, according to a favourite device of his when writing through a foreign Post Office, he paraphrased the personal allusions. The proposition had, he said, been " strongly opposed by three of those who talk to dead men by torchlight,[1] and more veiledly by the man from Devonshire. It had all the air of a Scotch intrigue. The matter was as usual put off." The recalcitrant ministers referred to were no doubt himself, Lords Derby and Carnarvon, and Sir Stafford Northcote. The " Scotch intrigue " probably referred to the Queen, who was at Balmoral at the time.

This incident revived all Lord Carnarvon's suspicions.

From Lord Carnarvon, October 8, 1877.

" I conclude that the interval between our last and our next Cabinet will be employed in an attempt to win over the hesitating element amongst them, and to secure a distinct and overwhelming majority. When that is accomplished, I shall not be surprised if *extreme* pressure is applied."

Lord Salisbury in his answer makes no allusion

[1] An allusion to Mr. Lowe's well-known description of speaking in the House of Lords as " talking to dead men by torchlight."

to this forecast. For the last six months Lord Beaconsfield had shown such a consistent anxiety to secure his co-operation, that any deliberate purpose of rupture had no doubt become incredible to him. He replied only that he saw no very serious dangers ahead at present. Though, among the public, feeling against Russia was strong, " it nowhere rises nearly to Income Tax point." (*October 14.*)

A few weeks later its strength was notably increased. The period of Turkish triumph was short. In November sinister rumours began to reach Constantinople, and on the 11th of that month Kars fell. On December 9, starved but not subdued, Osman Pasha's army capitulated at Plevna after a last desperate effort to break through the vastly larger force by which it was surrounded. Sympathies stirred by the long defence broke forth into passion at its heroic close. The incipient war agitation of the previous spring became actual and urgent, and a considerable section of the London press clamoured for instant armed intervention by England. The music-hall public was unconsciously occupied in creating a convenient nickname for the supporters of the agitation and for their political posterity for many years to come. A versified jingle, in no way superior to thousands of its kind, had the fortune to give satisfying expression to the passing sentiment. Throughout that winter, in every hall in London, audiences were nightly chorusing its refrain with appropriate emphasis on the enforcing expletive : " We don't want to fight, but, by Jingo, if we do."

The Turks appealed to the Powers for mediation. The British Foreign Office picked up negotiations where they had left them the previous July. Russia was again told that even a temporary occupation of Constantinople would " seriously endanger " the good

relations existing between the two countries, and Lord Derby expressed the most earnest hope that no temptation would induce her to attempt it. But there were members of the Ministry who thought that something more than a merely verbal warning was required. On December 14 the Cabinet met. The Prime Minister proposed that Parliament should be immediately called together, a vote of credit for an increase of our military force demanded and mediation simultaneously undertaken.[1] Lord Derby refused consent and intimated resignation. Lord Salisbury supported him in his protest and the Cabinet broke up without coming to any decision.

Colleagues intervened to avert the threatened catastrophe. Sir Stafford Northcote took the initiative as go-between. He had maintained cordial relations with the Prime Minister, but was anxious to preserve peace and was largely sympathetic with Lord Salisbury's point of view. On the evening of the 14th he wrote to him, urging the necessity of union and of agreement upon some positive line of action. If Lord Derby could be induced to "take a lead" of some sort, he would receive good backing in the Cabinet,—"but we cannot go on without a policy,—with nothing but a *non possumus*,—and a break-up in the present state of affairs may lead to chaos and to war." Lord Salisbury sent back a statement of his own position, which was accompanied by a short accompanying letter and was therefore presumably intended for communication to other of his colleagues.

To Sir S. Northcote, December 15, 1877.

"I have put down in a separate note the difficulties which the present propositions, combined with

[1] *Life of Disraeli*, vol. vi. p. 201.

Derby's almost certain resignation if they are pressed, raise in my mind.

"I quite agree with you that the *non possumus* is leading to very blank results. But this remedy is worse than the disease.

"An active policy is only possible under one of two conditions—that you shall help the Turks, or coerce them. I have no objection to the latter policy or to a combination of the two. With the former alone I cannot be content. But, as you know, neither the Queen nor the Prime Minister will have anything to do with the latter."

(*Accompanying Memorandum.*)

"It is proposed to summon Parliament in great haste to ask for money wherewith to arm. Before the recess the money might have been obtained as a measure of precaution, without any full exposition of policy. But money which is so urgently wanted that we cannot wait three weeks to have it in the usual session of Parliament must be wanted for a special purpose. Parliament will insist on knowing what that special purpose is. Your reply, I presume, will be, 'The defence of Constantinople.' But if you want money so urgently for this purpose, you must, in consistency, use it without delay. You must arm at once; and send your contingent to Constantinople at the earliest possible date. Meanwhile, at the very first moment of the announcement that Parliament is summoned, the Turks will abandon all idea of negotiation and prepare for a desperate defence. The infernal newspapers, who dog our footsteps pretending to belong to us and howling for blood, will from the very first moment place the most belligerent interpretation on the summons of Parliament; and I doubt not they will know of the vote of money to be asked for. The result will be that the war will go on; the Turkish resistance will be renewed; and the campaign will be raging at the foot of the Balkans, when our troops arrive in Constantinople. Do you

imagine that they can remain there in an attitude of 'conditional neutrality' — not helping or encouraging the Turk, not showing any sign of life, until the first Russian shows himself on the slope of the Dyrkos earthworks? Even if the Turks permitted us to come otherwise than as allies—which is very doubtful,—such a proceeding—taken at this time,—must end in co-operation with the Turks. It will be a Crimean war; only postponed until our allies have been half destroyed.

"The proposal of yesterday seems to me therefore to place us on the steep slope which leads to war. Is there any justification in danger to 'British interests'? Russia has not yet crossed the Balkans; —the roads are still impassable to artillery, or nearly so; there is a long distance to traverse for commissariat: and winter has but just begun. But the most important consideration of all is that Austria has pledged herself not to suffer any Russian possession of Constantinople in language so distinct, that unless we are to treat her as a Power with whom language has no binding force, she *must* prevent it.

"I hold, therefore, that Constantinople is in no real danger: and that a call to arms, hasty and urgent, may have the effect, and probably proceeds from the wish, of involving us in war to uphold Turkey.

"This would be difficult enough to swallow. But to me the matter presents itself in a still more serious light. I shall have to ask myself how, with such a policy laid down, affairs are likely to be conducted in a Cabinet in which the Prime Minister's wishes are no longer balanced by Derby's well-known aversion for war. His resignation will create, at such a juncture, the utmost consternation. Not only will it unite all sections of the Opposition, and throw into great discouragement the non-warlike portion of our own party; but it will divide the nation into two camps—those who are for aiding the Turks and those who are for leaving them to their fate. The latter

will attack furiously, by every weapon which popular agitation or parliamentary forces can furnish. The fight will become intensely bitter; those who are for war will become more warlike, those who are for peace will become more anti-Turkish. In such a mêlée all half opinions, all nice distinctions will be crushed out. It cannot be doubted that, under pressure of engagements into which they will have slid, and in the heat of the fight with the Opposition, the Cabinet will surrender itself to the war party, and any advocates of peace who may have stayed behind Derby will not be in a pleasant position.

"These are the thoughts which were suggested to me in the Cabinet of yesterday, and found expression in the few words I added to my note to you."

As appears by this letter, it was the "immediate" summoning of Parliament with all that it implied and entailed, that constituted Lord Salisbury's chief objection to the Prime Minister's proposals. Sir Stafford replied that he "agreed with almost every word of his letter." "If we have a sensational call on the 7th, we must have a sensational policy to match it. We are not very likely to agree on the sensational policy, so we must not commit ourselves to the sensational call." (*December 15.*) Lord Derby proposed January 31 as the date of meeting; Lord Salisbury approved,—as long as there was no "hot haste" there would be no implied pledge of immediate action. (*December 16.*) Finally, at a Cabinet meeting on the 18th, a compromise was effected in the choice of January 17,—a date five weeks distant and clear of the Christmas holidays. On the same day Sir Stafford sent some suggestions of his own to Lord Salisbury for a "practical policy," in the event of mediation breaking down. They included, besides the taking of a war credit, the despatch of the fleet to the Bosphorus, and a military occupation of Gallipoli,

with a counterbalancing threat to withdraw and leave Turkey to her fate if she should show herself in any way unreasonable. Lord Salisbury accepted this plan as one that would "furnish a good basis" (*December 18*);—an opinion which scarcely promised permanence to his present co-operation with the Foreign Secretary.

Lord Bath, whose general support of the Ministry was becoming rapidly undermined by his anxiety for Russian friendship, wrote to Lord Salisbury to protest against the Cabinet policy as it was represented in the columns of the newspapers which supported them. Lord Salisbury, in his reply, began by repudiating in emphatic language the authority relied on.

To Lord Bath, December 19, 1877.

"I gather that you write under a firm belief that the D.T.—M.P.—and P.M.G.—represent in some fashion or other the policy of the Government. That the opponents of the Government should say so is only one of what I may call the legitimate injustices of party warfare. But that any one should seriously think so perplexes me. That their impudent pretensions should have been accepted at first was intelligible, but when, as months rolled on, their ravings were in act systematically disregarded, it surely must have occurred to people that some further credentials than mere pretension were required."

The Government, he said, still held themselves bound in every sense by the despatch of May 6. He was naturally reticent as to the difference actually existing in the Cabinet, but he concluded his letter by stating clearly enough the dilemma of the situation as it affected himself:

"I quite agree with you as to the very anxious position of affairs; but the anxiety arises from what the doctors call a complication. There are two

opposite dangers to be met and the remedies which diminish either increase the opposite. There is the danger of sliding insensibly into an alliance with the Turk; and there is the danger of arrangements hurtful to England, as indicated in the despatch I have referred to. If only one of these dangers existed, our course would be very plain sailing indeed, and would cause me no anxiety."

The Cabinet meeting of the 14th was the last in which battle was joined between the same forces. During the past twelve months Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury had each in turn allied himself with Lord Derby for the purpose of defeating the other's aims,—with a result of sustained inaction which was equally unsatisfactory to them both. Co-operation so negatively inspired was bound to be transitory, and the continuance of the present grouping was already recognised as insecure. When Ministers separated for their three days' Christmas holiday, both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary wrote to Lord Salisbury in competing appeal for his support.

The immediate occasion of Lord Beaconsfield's writing was to enclose a letter from Colonel Wellesley, —the military attaché at St. Petersburg,—reporting that the Russian Government was obtaining private intelligence of Cabinet discussions and at the same time urging that the present was a most favourable moment for bringing about the "inevitable" war with Russia. The Prime Minister made no direct allusion to this advice but expressed his own belief that "a firm front" shown by England would terminate the existing war without injury to her interests; "I think I could persuade you of this; but I will not dwell upon the matter here." Having discussed the leakage complained of, he closed his letter with

a general invitation to closer co-operation with himself in counsel.

From Lord Beaconsfield, December 24, 1877.

"We must put an end to all this mischievous gossip about war-parties and peace-parties in the Cabinet, and we must come to decisions which may be, and will be, betrayed, but which may convince Russia that we are agreed and determined. You and I must go together into the depth of the affair and settle what we are prepared to do. I daresay we shall not differ when we talk the matter over together, as becomes public men with so great a responsibility; but unless we make an effort to clear ourselves of the Canidian spells which are environing us, we shall make shipwreck of alike our own reputations and the interests of our country." [1]

Lord Salisbury responded briefly but sympathetically with regard to the indiscretions reported, and dealt at length with Colonel Wellesley's advice.

To Lord Beaconsfield, December 26, 1877.

"I do not think Wellesley's advice 'to fight Russia now' is sound. She is exhausted in the sense that she cannot go on fighting without great sacrifices. But she is not so exhausted as to be unable to make head against any great national danger—such as a war with England. Nor would the Turks be of any great value as allies. Enrolled as troops under our officers they would fight admirably, but such an arrangement on an extensive scale will never be permitted, so long as the Turkish Government retains a shadow of independence. Under their own officers they would be of little use. I see therefore no reason for agreeing with Wellesley that this is a good moment for seeking to bring on the inevitable collision with Russia, if it be inevitable.

[1] *Life*, vol. vi. p. 210.

"And there are particular circumstances in our own case that make it unsuitable. Owing to financial difficulties, our Indian Army is in a less efficient state than will probably be the case some years hence, and the position of Cabul is a difficulty. Our English Army has not had time to accumulate reserves under Cardwell's system. Our manufacturing industries are depressed, and profoundly averse to war. And, owing to the peculiar condition of the Continent, Austria, our natural ally in such a question, has been seduced from us, at least for the moment.

"The national feeling here, though strongly partial to the Turks, shrinks from war, and I think with a true instinct. Of course, it is possible that events may take such a turn as to force us into war ultimately, but it will be unpopular and unprofitable."

The reply stops there. It does not refer to Lord Beaconsfield's own views as to what was required, and it also takes no notice whatever of the invitation contained in the last paragraph of his letter.

Lord Derby's appeal was more direct than that of his chief. Its revealing sincerity and the strength of feeling which it exhibits—unusual in that quarter—call for a full quotation.

From Lord Derby, December 23, 1877.

"The more I reflect on the present situation, the more uneasiness I feel. It is difficult to give a definite reason for suspicions however strongly one may entertain them; but I know our chief of old, and from various things that have dropped from him, I am fully convinced—not indeed that he wishes for a war—but that he has made up his mind to large military preparations, to an extremely warlike speech, to an agitation in favour of armed intervention (recollect that he said in Cabinet: 'The country is asleep and I want to wake it'), and if possible to an expedition that shall occupy Constantinople or Gallipoli.

"Now I am not inclined to any of these things, and I believe others among us are not so either, but if we don't take care, we shall find ourselves, as you said last year about the vote of credit, 'on a slippery incline,' — each step will make another necessary, and in the end we may find ourselves in a position which none of us either expected or would have accepted beforehand.

"I have no feeling towards the Premier but one of personal friendship and goodwill, and would make personal sacrifices to help him out of a difficulty; but his views are different from mine, where such matters are concerned, not in detail but in principle. He believes thoroughly in 'prestige'—as all foreigners do, and would think it (quite sincerely) in the interests of the country to spend 200 millions on a war if the result of it was to make foreign States think more highly of us as a military power. These ideas are intelligible, but they are not mine nor yours, and their being sincerely held does not make them less dangerous. We are in real danger and it is impossible to be too careful. I write without any more specific object than that of general warning.

"The first thing to see to is that nothing shall be done without the Cabinet being consulted. That I can ensure, so far as diplomatic business is concerned.

"The next is to keep the military preparations within bounds and to insist on knowing exactly why they are wanted. In this we should only be anticipating the inevitable criticisms of the House of Commons.

"The third is to be ready for a difference on the speech from the Throne—which as matters stand is of the greatest consequence.

"Andrassy won't have our plan and has another to propose which we shall know in a day or two."

The omissions in this letter are noticeable and characteristic. Though written at a moment of the most acute international crisis it contains no allusion

whatever to the external facts of the situation, except for the perfunctory reference to Austrian negotiations with which it closes. The writer seems unable to assume, even as an hypothesis, that action might be necessitated by causes other than the warlike proclivities of the Prime Minister.

Lord Salisbury's answer to this letter has unfortunately not been preserved, but he made a draft of it—as he did of the one to Lord Beaconsfield—which appears to be complete. It is drastically brief and impersonal. A page and a half of platitude sufficed for a reply to two sheets of reasoned demonstration. He shares Lord Derby's anxiety as to the gravity of the present position,—is entirely at one with him as to the absurdity of waging war for prestige only,—deprecates the use of language which might convey the impression of more active intentions than are really entertained. There is no response whatever to the substance of the appeal made, and the Prime Minister's name is not so much as mentioned from the beginning to the end of the letter.

These two carefully drafted replies, written on the same day, show a very deliberate resolve not to be committed to the support of either colleague. It was the caution of a purpose in suspense rather than in doubt. They must be read in the light of those external happenings which Lord Derby ignored. Though the Russian advance had not yet attained the breathless rapidity which it was shortly to achieve, its final onrush had been launched and the problem to be dealt with was changing with each day's telegrams. It had already become seriously modified since the meeting of the Cabinet ten days earlier. The policy of the Prime Minister, against which Lord Salisbury had for nine months been contending, of isolated defiance of Russia in defence

of a Turkey in revolt against Europe, had almost become obsolete,—but it was still capable of being embodied in action. It was time to resume his freedom of decision as towards the party in the Cabinet with whom he had recently acted, but he was not yet prepared to engage it as towards their opponents.

That the possibility was present to his mind of England's even now becoming involved in a war in defence of the Sultan's Government is shown in the course of a letter written a week later to Lord Carnarvon. Its object was to dissuade his friend from a threatened resignation. Two days before, in replying to a deputation at the Colonial Office, Lord Carnarvon had expressed his confidence that there was "nobody insane enough" to desire a repetition of the Crimean War. These words aroused indignant comments in the war press and more responsible persons thought the speech diplomatically indiscreet at such a moment. Lord Beaconsfield censured it in Cabinet in language discourteously worded and which Lord Carnarvon interpreted as indicating an intention to perpetrate the insanity which he had denounced. He intimated that he could no longer remain in the Cabinet unless the words complained of were withdrawn. Lord Salisbury, who had not read into them so purposeful a meaning, urged that the ground offered for resignation would be insufficient. The country was in a "grave crisis,—in the presence of great perplexity, possibly of considerable danger." In such circumstances a Minister had only a right to resign for one reason,—that measures were being taken in which he could not conscientiously concur. He had no right to resign merely on account of language used. And to do so on this occasion would be to put the Prime Minister in a position which he

did not rightfully hold. Ministers were members of a Cabinet, not servants of the Premier. An expression of his sentiments not endorsed by his colleagues as a whole was no reason for leaving the Cabinet. The letter concludes :

To Lord Carnarvon, January 8, 1878.

" At this point I got your box and your proposed letter to the P.M. You must allow me to express my hope that you will think over the matter very carefully before you send this letter. Assume for a moment that he honestly thinks that your speech at that particular juncture was an enbarrassment to the negotiations. He had no right to express that opinion in the Cabinet though he had a perfect right to hold it ; and, if he did express it, he should have done so in more guarded terms. But the opinion having been expressed, however unjustifiably, can he honestly retract it—if it be true (which is a hypothesis you must allow is conceivable) that he really holds it ? Is it then a ground for resigning at the present moment because he thinks, and has expressed the thought, that a course which you have taken has been inexpedient ?—for that is all his words come to when divested of their rhetorical dress. I am earnestly of opinion that this is no sound ground for resigning,—that he will have the advantage of you in the controversy which will follow,—that you will not only damage your own influence over the pending question, but seriously enfeeble the colleagues who agree with you on it and the prospects of the cause of peace you desire to uphold. . . .

" It is very possible that several of us may have to resign a few days hence. But for Heaven's sake let it be on a broad issue of policy clearly raised,—not on a personal question of which it will be impossible to make the nation understand the rights or appreciate the importance. Providence has put in our hands the trust of keeping the country from

entering on a wrongful war. Do not renounce such a task on account of a rude phrase by a man whose insolence is proverbial."

The difficulty was got over. Lord Beaconsfield agreed to such an interpretation of his language as Lord Carnarvon felt able to accept. But his secession could only be deferred. The two friends did not really agree upon their diagnosis of the situation. There were more ways than one in which war might be incurred. Six months before this time Lord Salisbury had recognised that beyond a certain point the advance of Russia would constitute a menace to peace and must be stopped, even at the cost of intervening on the side of Turkey. Lord Carnarvon had from the first refused to admit that an intervention so conditioned could ever be admissible, or need ever be necessary, and, though the course of events had kept the difference in abeyance, it had never been removed. More than this, as the Colonial Secretary confessed at the time of his actual resignation, his conviction of a fundamental antagonism in principle between himself and the Prime Minister had so strengthened as to make co-operation with him intolerable. Such a position as between colleagues could not endure,—its continuance up till now had only been possible in the pause of expectation which had suspended all action during the Plevna siege. The pause was now ended. Conflicting passions of racial enthusiasm, military ambition, national jealousy, were loose upon Europe in all their menacing activity. The crisis which they produced was destined to bring to Lord Salisbury one of the decisive opportunities of his public life and at the same time to sever its closest personal comradeship and reconcile its most deeply rooted personal antagonism.

CHAPTER VI

THE EASTERN QUESTION, 1878

THE APPROACH TO CATASTROPHE

With the fall of Plevna the war had entered upon its third and final stage. The wrestlers' grip which had immobilised the combatants for five months was succeeded by an onrush of the invading forces which took the world as much by surprise as their sudden check had done in the previous July. Osman Pasha found no competitors among the Turkish higher command. Before the close of the year the Russian troops had forced their way through the Balkans at several points. On January 3 they defeated the Turks at Sofia; on the 10th they gained a decisive victory in the Shipka Pass where another whole army corps capitulated. After that the Turkish resistance collapsed altogether and the invaders' advance became an unopposed march southward.

This rapid foreshortening of the military prospect reacted at once upon the political outlook. The moral situation developed as swiftly as the material. Incitements to crusading conquest and limitless imperial expansion filled the St. Petersburg newspapers;—great pressure was being exerted upon the Czar to repudiate the pledges of moderation which he had personally given;—Russia's expectations of reward were mounting with the victories for which she had waited so long, and if they were to be checked without

inflicting an intolerable disappointment, quick decisions were imperative. Unfortunately these were just what Austria and England, the two neutral Powers most immediately concerned, were incapable of supplying.

In the debate upon the Queen's speech that year, Lord Beaconsfield, much to his own surprise, brought upon himself a solemn remonstrance from Vienna by referring with innocently intended alliteration to an "anxious Austria." The accuracy of the epithet must have been its principal offence. Russia's triumph presented only a choice of unacceptable alternatives to the Austrian Government. For her to be established as supreme in the Balkan peninsula, either directly or vicariously, was inadmissible. To deprive her by force of the fruits of her victory was an adventure which seems to have had attractions for Count Andrassy personally. He was fond of dwelling upon the strategical advantages which his country would command in such a conflict. A year before, when Lord Salisbury in the course of their interview in Vienna expressed surprise at his apparent indifference to a Russian invasion of the Balkans, he replied by rising silently to his feet, walking to the map, and, with a dramatic gesture, laying his finger upon the neck of land which separates Hungary from the Black Sea. But this course was known to be opposed both to his Emperor's sentiments and to the requirements of Berlin. There remained the alternative suggested in the Convention of Reichstadt, —acquiescence, within certain limits, in the advantage which Russia might achieve in the war, balanced by compensation for Austria in Bosnia. The limits in question were believed to exclude, among other things, the acquisition by Russia of sovereignty in Constantinople, the creation of a predominant Slav

State in the Balkan peninsula, and any prolonged occupation of it by Russian troops. Count Andrassy had hitherto professed himself confident that Russia would respect these conditions. But now, in the completeness of her victory, the chances of her doing so voluntarily were rapidly diminishing, while on the other hand the hesitating acquiescence in the Bosnian compensation which Lord Salisbury had noted in him in 1876 had been sensibly modified by the violent hostility which his Hungarian compatriots were displaying to it.

The reasons for Austria's anxiety in this emergency were apparent,—the causes which made her incapable of meeting it effectually were more complex. Count Andrassy had throughout been eloquent in exhorting England to an independent assertion of her claims against Russia,—mainly moved thereto, it was thought, by his Bosnian difficulty. If England could be persuaded to vigorous action, Russian demands might be so far reduced as to abrogate the necessity for territorial bargaining. But his exhortations had been constantly discredited by his admitted continuance in friendly and confidential communication with the Power against whom they were directed. His policy in fact, while the war was in progress, might have been summarised as an effort—almost candidly avowed—to maintain and cultivate a Russian alliance while promoting with England an anti-Russian combination. Such patent insincerity of aim could only be accounted for by a conflict of inspiration. His own personality was not one upon whose persistency of purpose others could safely build: a man of undoubted capacity and vision,—but full of changing moods,—with a touch of the Gascon in him,—constantly in revolt against the forces which pressed upon him and as constantly incapable of ultimate resistance

to them. To the necessity,—a normal one for all Austrian statesmen of that epoch,—of reconciling the demands of mutually hostile races whose parliamentary support was in each case essential to him, was added that of conciliating the wishes of a master whose views were quite distinct from his own. The Drei-Kaiser-Bund was no mere diplomatic nickname for the combination which it represented. The personal idiosyncrasies of the three Sovereigns had always to be reckoned with. They carried on a private correspondence among themselves upon State affairs, and even Prince Bismarck used to complain that its contents were not always communicated to their responsible advisers. The Emperor William's affection for his Russian nephew—a notably attractive personality—had a recognised influence upon the action of his Government, and Francis Joseph was also, on less personal grounds, possessed of Slav sympathies which were diametrically opposed to those of his Hungarian Chancellor.

Behind these causes of uncertainty in Austrian policy, adding its quota to their complication, lay a force more potent and constant, but whose operation it was not always easy to identify. Austro-German friendship had not yet achieved the solidity which it subsequently attained; the shadow of Sadowa still lay athwart it; the German Chancellor's influence upon Count Andrassy's policy rested upon a personal —or, at most, a sectional—attachment and not upon a national one; the traditional alliance for Berlin was still with Russia. As regarded any overt action, Prince Bismarck kept himself studiously in the background and the scope and effect of his many rumoured interpositions at Vienna and St. Petersburg were constantly in dispute among his contemporaries. His fixity of purpose and his capacity for the subtler

forms of diplomacy secured for him in that generation a reverence which amounted to superstition. It had become the fashion, in the press and among continental statesmen, to speak of opposition to his will as a futile waste of effort. Nevertheless, on this issue, taking the event as a whole, his policy failed signally of achieving its purpose. To maintain good relations between Russia and Austria, and thus preserve friendship with both, was the object which, according to his repeated declarations, was of paramount importance to him. It may have been unattainable. Yet he undoubtedly promoted a war whose outcome was not only to shatter the combination for which he had laboured, and to embitter Russia's hostility against Austria, but to replace her age-long alliance with Germany by a permanent and menacing alienation.

In his published *Reminiscences* he explains this encouragement of the Russo-Turkish war as an effort to postpone an evil which had become inevitable. Russia and Austria were already two; Pan-Slavist fanaticism had to be appeased; the Balkans were its safest outlet; the alternative would have been a Russian invasion of Galicia.[1] Various utterances of his suggest that, at least at the outset, he was moved also by the larger and more positive hope of putting a term to trouble in the East by precipitating the long-threatened extinction of the Turkish Empire. The advantage of Partition, from his point of view, could be argued as not only eliminating the most permanent source of difference between his two neighbours; it would also, through their emergence as Mediterranean Powers, and through the further necessity of apportioning the Asiatic and African provinces of Turkey, provide material for exciting

[1] *Reminiscences*, vol. ii. pp. 228-231.

the susceptibilities of France and occupying her energies at a safe distance from the Rhine for years to come.

But the hypothetical beneficiaries of this policy would have none of it. In vain did inspired utterances from Berlin dwell recurrently on the suitability of Egypt as England's share in the proposed inheritance. English public opinion refused even to contemplate Partition. Nearer home, obstruction was equally resolute. Prince Bismarck was never tired of girding at Austria's timidity. Why, he asked, did she not march her troops into Servia while the war was in progress? With that principality and Bosnia at her disposal she could have afforded to ignore all Russian advantage elsewhere! Count Andrassy was not to be fired to any such adventures, and shrank patently from the instalment of them to which he was ultimately persuaded.

The change which appeared in the German Chancellor's attitude as the war drew to a close implied a recognition of these facts. During its earlier phases he had made no secret of his will for Turkey's destruction;—his neutrality as towards Russia could hardly have been more benevolent and kept its name. As a prelude to Partition the completeness of her final success might have been turned to advantage. But, as things were, it became a present menace to the jealous equipoise upon which the Drei-Kaiser-Bund rested, and his zeal in her cause notably cooled. "Sofia and Shipka are victories that might have been dispensed with," was his reported comment on those culminating triumphs. From this time forth his path lay through perilous places, and he was at length compelled to what it had been his main object to avoid and to "opt" between his two neighbours. For some anxious weeks, either his

choice hung in doubt, or he wished to persuade others that it did so. To many, and to Lord Salisbury among the number, its possible devolution upon Russia appeared as the ultimate catastrophe. Reasons for this alarm are not far to seek. Such a choice might well have indicated a decision for war throughout Europe. A permitted attack by Russia upon Austria, ensuring for the time the security of Germany's southern and eastern frontiers, would have left her free to lay the ghost of the *revanche*, once and for all, by consummating the destruction of France. The fatal attraction which such a programme might present to the man of '66 and '70 was sufficient to account for the relief with which its final repudiation in the conclusion of the Austro-German alliance was greeted eighteen months later.

Prince Bismarck's attitude towards this country was as much the subject of conflicting interpretation as the rest of his conduct. If his somewhat advertised hesitation was genuine, it is possible that the two distinct phases of inertia and activity through which British diplomacy passed in the course of that spring may have had their effect, first on the suspension of his choice, and then on its determination in Austria's favour. His professed sentiments were friendly though detached. Some of the language reported of him sounds strangely to modern ears. Never while he lived should Germany take part in action against England,—nor did he foreseee any difficulty in making such an assurance good. German opinion was divided as regarded Russia,—the sympathies of the Court were with her, those of the nation were against her. But the popularity of England was universal with all classes, — with Court and Parliament, with rulers and with people alike. An alliance with her had

always been his dream—the powers of the two Empires were complementary—acting together they would be able to dictate peace and order to Europe for years to come. Such professions did not command universal acceptance. They admitted of evident interpretation as intended to hearten England to a more defiant attitude. And an Anglo-Russian war—which in Paris at least was believed to be one of his objectives—would undoubtedly have restored the balance between his two neighbours at a minimum of risk to his own frontiers. But there appears no evidence of his having worked for it whole-heartedly.

During the weeks which immediately followed the fall of Plevna, German influence seems to have been mainly occupied in backing the pro-Slav forces always at work in the Austrian Empire. They acted to forbid a breach with Russia and to encourage a possible solution through a separate territorial bargain with her. Count Andrassy's dislike to this alternative,—though he never let go of it and steadily refused any overt demonstration against his eastern neighbour,—was witnessed to by the increasing urgency with which he pressed England to active intervention. He was met by a hesitation which, though different in its origin, was a counterpart of his own. Throughout December and January, while Russia with feverish energy was daily transforming the situation further to her advantage, the two neutral Governments seemed mainly intent upon manœuvring each other into the post of danger. Austria's interests were those most immediately involved, but England's obligation to take the lead could also be effectively argued. In view of the security of her distant base, the slightness of risk which she would incur, the direct challenge addressed to her in Russia's advance upon

Constantinople, the Austrian statesman could plausibly plead that, before he incurred by any public menace the enmity of one powerful neighbour and the possible alienation of the other, he must have some guarantee of active support. In what precise form, in what defined eventuality, was England prepared to maintain her claims by anything more effectual than words? Lord Derby asked for corresponding assurances and, in the meanwhile, through his mastery of diplomatic retort and above all of the uses of silence, successfully evaded on his side all commitments, whether immediate or contingent.

This caution, unaccompanied as it was by any independent initiative, had unfortunately wider effects than that of disappointing Austria's interested expectation. The impression which it created abroad was deepened by reports of Cabinet dissension and by the witnessed tumult of popular agitation at home. The conviction of England's voluntary abdication began to spread to other capitals besides Vienna. It was founded on an entirely false appreciation of the national temper and had only to be acted upon by Russia for war to have become inevitable. This was the aspect of the crisis with which Lord Salisbury was directly called upon to deal, and it is the one therefore with which we shall be mainly concerned here. The imminence of the catastrophe and the publicity of the different steps by which it was at first approached and finally avoided, absorbed general attention at the time. In the press and on the platform the diplomatic struggle came to be treated mainly as a duel between those two Powers, and but small attention was paid in public to the wider issues of international rivalry, with all that they contained of future calamity to the world, which were meanwhile being decided behind the closed doors of continental Cabinets.

When the new year opened, the Turks were still clinging to the belief that at the last England would interpose to save them from defeat. The continental Powers had unanimously refused the collective mediation for which the Sultan had appealed after the fall of Plevna. Germany and Austria had accompanied their refusal by an urgent recommendation that he should address himself directly to Russia. He indignantly replied that he would rely only on the counsels and good offices of England and asked for her separate mediation. The British Foreign Office after some delay,—partly occasioned by the Cabinet struggle which has been recorded,[1]—agreed to enquire at St. Petersburg whether overtures for peace would be accepted. The ambassador was told that the Porte must address itself directly to the commanders in the field who would state the conditions upon which an armistice would be granted ; the necessary instructions had been sent to them ; no other form of approach would be recognised. The correspondence between London and St. Petersburg was conducted with great deliberation, and it was not until the 8th of January that the Russian answer was transmitted to the Porte with a recommendation that its requirements should be complied with. The invading army had taken full advantage of the month's delay, and it was with expressions of angry regret that they had not followed the same advice when first tendered to them from other quarters that the Turks at length yielded to necessity. They telegraphed a request for an armistice to the Grand Duke Nicholas, the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies in Europe. He replied that it could not be discussed until the bases of peace had been agreed upon ;—and his armies moved on. The British ambassador remonstrated indignantly at

[1] See p. 163.

St. Petersburg;—had he not been assured that full instructions for the negotiation of an armistice had been given to the Grand Duke? Prince Gortchakoff explained. The instructions were of too important a character to be entrusted to the telegraph; they had been sent by a special messenger, and in the disordered state of the country it would take him at least ten days to reach the front. "I told you," concluded the Russian Chancellor blandly, "that instructions had been sent;—I never said that they had been received."

This specimen of a diplomacy worthy of the days of Talleyrand did not tend to ingratiate Englishmen to whom such subtleties were not even a memory. But the incident was a symptom of something more serious than Prince Gortchakoff's attachment to the traditions of his youth. For the time being the soldiers and the fanatics had triumphed, and the Russian Foreign Office,—hitherto associated with the party of moderation,—was deliberately working to keep the war going until the most extreme aspirations had been satisfied. Prince Gortchakoff's message was sent on the 10th,—the day on which Mehemet Ali's army capitulated in the Shipka. Russian troops were already swarming south of the Balkans,—200,000 men were reported to be advancing upon Adrianople. Urgent warnings were received in London from Constantinople. The Czar's undertaking not to occupy that city unless compelled by military necessity had made no mention of the Dardanelles, its maritime gateway. The Cabinet met on the 12th and resolved to ask for an immediate assurance in repair of this omission. Failing its receipt it was decided to send the fleet up to Gallipoli,—Lord Carnarvon dissenting from this decision. After three days—on the 15th—no answer having been received

from St. Petersburg, the Cabinet met again,—Lord Derby being absent through illness,—and the despatch of the fleet was decided upon. The same afternoon the required assurance arrived,—the decision was rescinded,—Lord Carnarvon's already proffered resignation was withdrawn,—and the Ministry was able to meet Parliament still united. Throughout all the stages of this abortive incident Lord Salisbury had for the first time ranged himself definitely with the advocates of action. Indeed, in Mr. Gathorne-Hardy's published journal, he is mentioned as having taken the leading part on the 15th in urging the immediate despatch of the fleet.[1] His colleague attributes this to the irritation produced in him by Prince Gortchakoff's proceedings. But in fact no such secondary motive was required. The " complication " of which he had complained in his letter to Lord Bath had been finally eliminated in the Shipka Pass,—the Turks were suing for peace,—and he was free at length to support that course of active initiative of whose independent advantage he had always been convinced.

Turkish delegates were despatched to the Grand Duke's headquarters to hear—and to submit to—the Russian proposals for a peace basis and to arrange the military conditions of an armistice. From the day that they passed behind the enemy's lines, no more was heard of them or of the negotiations upon which they were engaged. The only news which came from the seat of war was of the constantly accelerating advance of the Russian forces—of the mob of refugees that crowded the snow-covered roads in front of them,—of the growing panic at Constantinople.

Parliament met on the 17th. The Address was debated with monotonous repetitions of the party

[1] *Life of Gathorne-Hardy*, vol. ii. p. 46.

attacks and counter-attacks which had occupied the recess; but men listened conscious of graver issues imminent. Rumours of an approaching schism in the Cabinet filled the lobbies. The war-press, somewhat belated in its private information, continued to heap denunciations on Lord Salisbury as the assumed champion of Government inaction. Opposition speakers in the House of Lords, anxious to widen the supposed rift, condoled solemnly with the Indian Secretary on the appearance of these attacks in the organs of his party. They were met with characteristic mockery. "My acquaintance with the newspapers is not so great that I can say whether the *Morning Post* abuses me or not; but if it likes to abuse me, I hope it will continue to do so." [1] The Queen's Speech bore more authoritative witness to the disagreements of its constructors in the heaped-up qualifications of its language; there was a possibility of "unexpected" events, which, if they *did* occur, *might* call for precautionary measures, for the preparation of which a credit would be required. The Prime Minister affirmed the continuity of Government policy, but carefully dissociated himself from any championship of the Turkish Empire as such. Lord Salisbury, while he emphasised this modification in his chief's attitude, met it by making the objects which they had always had in common the principal theme of his own speech. His arguments were mainly addressed to those members of his party who had hitherto worked with him. Lord Carnarvon's repudiation of the Crimean War was dexterously paraphrased. England in the past had believed in the necessity of maintaining the Turkish Empire by force of arms. This generation had broken with that tradition, and he claimed that his Government had

[1] Hansard, January 17, 1878.

voiced the change though they " had felt that reiterated warnings were necessary before the old tradition could be set aside or an ancient policy departed from." But he differentiated this position from that taken up by the Government's opponents. He reprehended sternly the view which favoured this " war of liberation " on humanitarian grounds. " It had accumulated in nine short months more misery than would result from generations of Turkish government." The horror of war which always dominated him had been amply nourished during the past year. The conflict had been a cruel one, the semi-barbarism and mutual hatred of the populations among whom it was waged extending and intensifying its calamity. But his difference with the critics of Government went further, and at the close of his speech he spoke emphatically of one consideration which no British statesman could be excused for neglecting :

" Whatever may happen to the Turkish Empire, its geographical peculiarities and conditions and all the political results which flow from them will remain the same ; and British interests, as we have defined them, must, as well as the Turk, occupy a very considerable position in the consideration of Her Majesty's Government. The duties of humanity I am very far from disputing—indeed I claim for this Government that we have made the strongest possible exertions to procure good government and peace for the Christian populations of the East ; but I am not prepared to accept the new gospel which I understand is preached—that it is our business for the sake of any populations whatever to disregard the trust which the people of this country and our Sovereign have reposed in our hands." (*Hansard, January 17, 1878.*)

By compelling the Turks to negotiate the pre-

liminaries of peace privately with her military commanders, Russia had effectually prevented the neutral Powers from intervening in the discussion. Did she mean to go further and altogether ignore Europe's claim to consultation? London and Vienna addressed a formal protest to St. Petersburg, repudiating the validity of any settlement to which the signatory Powers to the Treaty of Paris had not consented. Austria accompanied this protest by private remonstrances of her own, which were said to have been vigorously worded. At the same time, her pressure upon the British Foreign Office became also stronger. The debates which had just taken place,—the evasions of the Queen's Speech,—the Opposition denunciations of intervention in any form, —the caution of ministerial replies,—had intensified her existing distrust. If Her Majesty's Government wished for co-operation, it must without delay prove its sincerity by action and commit Parliament publicly to the support of its policy. Austria had no intention of risking an unsupported war in defence of interests shared by others. Her own she could secure by such a separate understanding with Russia as was still open to her. It was for England to decide whether or no a reluctant Hungarian Chancellor was to be driven to that alternative.

This diplomatic pressure was reinforced by the news which continued to arrive from the Balkans. The Russian army entered Adrianople on the 20th; advanced bodies of its troops were making their appearance farther south; there were persistent reports of an approach towards Gallipoli, and the St. Petersburg Government admitted subsequently that a "corps of observation" had, in fact, been sent in that direction. Communication between the Turkish plenipotentiaries and their Government was

still cut off,—no information could be obtained either in Constantinople or from St. Petersburg as to the terms which were being demanded of them. The unusual mystery which surrounded these negotiations, the apparently indefinite postponement of an armistice, and the energy with which that postponement was being utilised roused suspicions which found clamorous expression in the lobbies of the House of Commons and reacted on the struggle which was proceeding in Cabinet. It was brought to a close within a week of the reassembling of Parliament by a victory for the party of action. On Wednesday the 23rd orders were despatched to the fleet to send ships up to Constantinople, and notice was given in Parliament of a vote of credit for six millions for war preparations —to be moved the following Monday. The same evening Lords Derby and Carnarvon resigned office. As regarded Lord Carnarvon, the resignation was final. Lord Salisbury had struggled to the last to avert it. He used to recall later how after one of the crucial meetings of Cabinet, he and his friend had paced together for an hour and a half round and round St. James's Square, in the frozen sleet of a bitter January evening, while he argued in vain for a continuance of the old comradeship. The resignation was announced on the Friday and the following day Lord Carnarvon wrote a letter of farewell to his friend :

From Lord Carnarvon, January 26, 1878.

" We shall have probably before long an opportunity of talking of recent events—so far as it is of any use to talk about them—but I should feel ill at ease if after our many years of personal and political friendship I did not write a few lines—if only to say how severe a pang it has cost me to separate my

line of action from yours. You know me however of old and that when once I have made up my mind on a question like this, where many more than the mere political considerations have a part, I am what my friends will call obstinate and my opponents perhaps something worse. I have seen all this coming for a long time and have honestly striven to avert it: but the difference between the Prime Minister and myself is simply irreconcilable and I doubt not that, as the course which I have taken is the most honest, so it will in the end prove the best. Whatever happens, do not let the political division alter in any degree our personal relations, and believe me still, as always, mindful of old days and old feelings."

To Lord Carnarvon, January 27, 1878.

"Many thanks for your very kind letter. Believe me, the necessity of parting has given me as severe a pang as ever I felt in my life. I have half dreaded it was coming for some time past. I got my first alarm last July, when the Turkish collapse seemed imminent and we used to discuss the extent and effect of our pledges; but I had hoped that the danger of our diverging had passed away. But now that the anticipated event has come about, I see that the difference between the principles on which we were going was too great to be bridged over. I am not surprised at the course you have taken—though I deeply deplore it—and it has left me with little interest in politics. But politics are not all one's life—and may form a very small part of it. Your letter assures me in the belief which I have never relinquished that, spite of foreign politics, the sympathy and friendship now of long years' endurance is undiminished between us."

Meanwhile great efforts were being made to induce the Foreign Secretary to withdraw his resignation. The news of it and of the decision which had pro-

duced it was followed by a sudden access of communicativeness at Russian headquarters. On the afternoon of the 24th a message was received at the Porte from the Turkish delegates conveying the terms demanded by the victorious general, and instructions to accept them were at once telegraphed from Constantinople. The bases thus agreed upon for negotiation followed the lines generally anticipated, —a pecuniary indemnity, a cession of territory in Asia, the independence of the actually self-governing Principalities, and the creation of a new autonomy in Bulgaria. But the point of immediate importance was that the Turks had accepted them,—that the proclamation of an armistice must immediately follow and that any further advance of the Russian army was no longer therefore to be dreaded. The naval counter-move seemed to have lost its urgency. The news came while the House of Commons was sitting, and three of the Ministers, acutely sensible of the effect which Lord Derby's resignation might produce upon the electorate, went up at once to Downing Street and urged their chief to take advantage of the changed position and countermand the order given to the fleet. Their pressure prevailed; there was no time for wider consultation;—as it was, the arresting telegram only reached the Admiral as his ships were actually entering the Dardanelles. Lord Salisbury was out of town that evening and only heard of the decision after it had been acted upon. He did not approve;—such an appearance of vacillation must discredit us in Europe and encourage reckless counsels in Russia. Years afterwards he expressed the conviction that, had the ships gone up at that time, the Russians would never have advanced to Constantinople nor pressed the extravagant claims to which that achievement incited them. They would have

been spared a heavy mortification and Europe would have been saved from an unhappy embitterment of international relations.

But the price was paid and the goods were delivered. After a four days' interregnum, Lord Derby was persuaded to resume direction of the Foreign Office. A triumph of political management was hailed; a great danger to the Ministry and to the country was thought to have been averted. The Prime Minister wrote to announce his colleague's return to Lord Salisbury, who sent a line of congratulation in reply: "I am very glad Derby has come back. At this juncture his secession would have exposed us to all kinds of wild suspicions and would have added to the difficulties which in any case the country will have to face." [1] The congratulation was markedly restricted to the secondary results of the reconciliation and must be regarded mainly as a tribute to courtesy and to the philosophy which makes the best of accomplished facts. Both by the theory and practice of the Constitution the appointment and retention of Ministers is an exclusive prerogative of the Prime Minister, and on this occasion, whether rightly or wrongly, Lord Salisbury felt himself debarred even from criticism by the fact that his chief had informed him immediately after Lord Derby's resignation that he already had "in his pocket" the Queen's acceptance of himself as Foreign Secretary. But, whatever he may have felt as to the compensating gain in public confidence, he did not in private conceal his opinion that a grave mistake was being made.

By an immediate irony of events the condition upon which Lord Derby had resumed office was cancelled within a fortnight. The vision which fired

[1] January 27, 1878.

orthodox Russia of a St. Sophia restored to Christian worship never seems to have been countenanced by the Emperor himself. But it still inspired the Pan-Slavist leaders, and they were supported by the military commanders who loudly proclaimed their resolve to sign peace only within the walls of Constantinople. The crudely disingenuous methods by which this combination sought to outwit Europe and force their master's hand were responsible for a sensational interlude which brought England and Russia to the verge of war. Their plan of proceedings, which had been suspended by the threatened advance of the British ships, was immediately resumed on its arrest. A mystery of silence again enveloped the place of negotiation. For a week no notice was taken of the Sultan's acceptance of the offered terms. Repeated telegrams to the Turkish envoys remained unanswered. It was stated afterwards that they were delivered at a spot forty miles from their destination and conveyed across the intervening distance by messengers on foot. Enquiry at St. Petersburg only elicited the reply that for several days communications from the front had ceased; Prince Gortchakoff was surprised at the circumstance but not disturbed—he presumed that the field telegraph had broken down. The electric wires were still effectual, however, for the conveyance of other news, and agitated telegrams continued to pour into London from Constantinople. Russian troops had appeared at Burgas,—were signalled at Rodosto,—were advancing towards Gallipoli,—were closing round the capital. On February 1 the Turkish envoys telegraphed to their Sovereign that an armistice had been signed, but made no communication of its terms. The Porte ordered its troops to lay down their arms. To its dismay and to that of the neutral Governments

this example was not followed by its opponents. Their advance continued; a detached force entered Dedeagatch and passed along the shores of the Marmora to within a few miles of the Bulair lines, while the main army pressed steadily forward to Constantinople. On the 5th it occupied Tchataldja, and its commander ordered the Turkish General to evacuate the lines of Tchekmedje—the last defence of the capital itself. The same evening all the telegraph wires between Constantinople and Europe were cut, and it was through Bombay that Mr. Layard conveyed these startling items of intelligence to his Government.

It was subsequently discovered that the places occupied had all been ceded under the armistice. It was due only to the gratuitous concealment of its terms that the Russian commanders were left for some days under the imputation of having been guilty of a treacherous breach of the laws of war. If the intention had been to forestall interference from England it signally failed. The House of Commons was engaged that week in debating the war credit for which Ministers were asking. Mr. Forster had charge of an Opposition amendment denouncing the vote as unnecessary and provocative. The attack on Government was being pressed amidst all the accompaniments of a set party battle. But on the evening of the 6th, when the rumours which had been flying through London during the day were corroborated in the House by the reading of Mr. Layard's briefly sensational telegram, the debate collapsed. Mr. Forster, voicing the sentiments of the large majority of his party, rose on the spot and asked leave to withdraw his amendment. The next morning the papers, in default of more certain news, published reports that Russian troops had already entered the forbidden city. The feeling in Parliament was un-

mistakable, and a more dangerous outburst of popular passion in the country was instantly to be dreaded. Already, on the evening of the 6th, Lord Salisbury had sent a hurried note to his chief pressing for immediate action. Even Lord Derby accepted its necessity, and orders were telegraphed to Besika Bay for a squadron to proceed to Turkish waters. It started—and was again stopped—this time by a new and unexpected obstacle. The Grand Duke Nicholas announced that if English ships appeared in the Bosphorus his troops should at once enter the capital. The Sultan thereupon appealed to the British Government to reverse its decision, and when the ships appeared at the entrance of the Dardanelles the Admiral was warned that the Governor of Gallipoli had orders to oppose their passage. He paused and telegraphed to London for instructions ;—Mr. Layard in a simultaneous telegram strongly supporting the Turkish Government in its objections. Lord Salisbury doubted whether his colleagues' nerves would stand this further strain, and wrote to urge a resolute attitude upon the Prime Minister.

To Lord Beaconsfield, February 10, 1878.

" I hesitate to trouble you with an expression of opinion knowing the difficulties under which you labour ; but the very grave news this evening compels me to write. It is the most critical moment we have yet passed through.

" I cannot help fearing that efforts will be made in Cabinet to prevent the fleet being ordered to force its way in. Yet if, after all that has been said, the fleet once more returns to Besika Bay, our position will be utterly ridiculous. We shall disgust our friends in the country and lose all weight in Europe.

" Two things are evident from the Grand Vizier's communication—first that Turkey has engaged herself

to Russia not to allow our fleet to come up: and secondly, that she takes no account (naturally enough) of the interests of Europe. Why has Russia put her under such a strong engagement? I can imagine two reasons.

"First—that Russia may have leisure and opportunity to fortify some position near the Bosphorus closing the mouths of the Black Sea to all but her own ships. Secondly—because our ships at Constantinople would practically command her line of retreat. She will have to occupy her present positions till the Conference is over. Should it break down from some quarrel with Austria, the presence of our ships will make all the difference as to Russia's position. If she is mistress of the water communications Austria's anger will matter to her very little. If she is *not* mistress of them, she is caught in a mouse-trap.

"Both, therefore, as a question of ultimate policy, and in view of the immediate moral effect, our fleet ought to force its way in without delay. You will see in Layard's *letter* circulated to-day that its recall a fortnight back was ascribed by the Porte merely to timidity."

The Cabinet stood firm, and for the fourth time in as many weeks a telegram was sent to the Admiral to go forward. If fired upon, he was "to return the fire." The Turkish Governor did not take up the challenge but contented himself with a repetition of his verbal protest. On February 15, after peripatations which had begun to excite the ribald mirth of Europe, the British ironclads anchored at length before the Golden Horn.

There were passionate threats from the Russian generals and a brief explosion of anger in St. Petersburg. The Czar declared that the action of England had relieved him from his pledge and that unless she withdrew her ships his troops should take possession.

But the impulse of anger passed and the threats were not carried out. A face-saving compromise was effected by the removal of the men-of-war to an anchorage in the Marmora some few miles distant from the city though in immediate telegraphic touch with it. There they remained for more than six months,—the war powers of Russia and England lying almost within sight and gunshot of one another with the most coveted prize of Europe between them. That such a situation should have issued in peace in spite of the constant irresponsible appeals to popular passion which were being made in both countries was sufficient testimony to the genuine will for it which inspired the men who really mattered on either side.

The course which Lord Salisbury had followed during this series of episodes, though it called for no anxiety of decision on his own part, came as a surprise to many and as a severe disappointment to some of his friends and personal supporters. Lord Bath, shortly after Lord Carnarvon's resignation, wrote reproachfully and at considerable argumentative length to protest against the iniquity of inviting Austrian assistance in obstructing Russia in her liberating mission. Lord Salisbury declined to pursue the larger issues raised and replied with a brief statement of the immediate grounds upon which he was acting.

To Lord Bath, January 31, 1878.

" No reasonable length of exposition would enable me even moderately to satisfy you on all the points you raise. Instead of controverting I will merely try to make our position clear in a few words.

" We stand by the despatch of May ; and if we were secure upon the points named in it, we should

trouble ourselves neither about the Turks nor Austria. The Turks are smashed ; but Austria is still available and we are driven to draw close to her and make use of her discontent, because Russia will not give us any unambiguous promise about Constantinople and the Dardanelles. It is of itself suspicious that she has fenced in every possible way and has refused to speak openly. It is more suspicious that, though the Turks accepted everything eight days ago, they have not so far as I know up to date of writing been allowed to hear one word from their plenipotentiaries. Meanwhile the Russians are within an easy day's march of Gallipoli and I believe of Constantinople ; the latter being under the circumstances contrary to her pledges. I do not see how—acting as a trustee—I should be doing my duty if I did not join in recommending precautions. One hour of frankness on Russia's part would have avoided the whole imbroglio."

Criticism was not confined to the small band of pro-Russian Tories. Men of all parties commented from their different points of view upon a recantation which they assumed as self-evident. Jingoes hailed a convert,—though with reserves of suspicion ; Liberals, who had hitherto testified to Lord Salisbury's qualities with a wooer's generosity, denounced him as cynical and dishonest. These judgements would not have been affected by reference to such incidental actualities as the May despatch or the movement of Russian armies. They were mainly inspired by a consideration only indirectly connected with the merits of the question, but which must be kept in view in any effort to appreciate the public attitude throughout this crisis. The sustained and feverish excitement which distinguished it and which was then admittedly unprecedented, can now be recognised as unique. Both before and since insurrection has been suppressed with cruelty as barbarous as that from which Bulgaria

suffered in 1876, and far more widespread in its effects. Both before and since, emergencies have arisen as threatening to the interests of the Empire as that which followed upon the war of 1877. But such occurrences have wholly failed to stir the indifference which is normally characteristic of Englishmen upon foreign questions. The only explanation of the contrast which offers is the position which the personal factor occupied in this controversy. One group of newspapers was continually proclaiming Mr. Gladstone a prophet—another as constantly denouncing him as a traitor. Alternate perorations hailed Lord Beaconsfield as the inspired champion of Empire or vilified him as an adventurer to whose unscrupulous scheming every sinister happening could be traced. For a quarter of a century English politics had been obsessed by the antagonism between these two remarkable men—and this agitation was the last and most violent manifestation of its power.

Viewed in the light of this obsession, Lord Salisbury's consistency admitted of no defence. Until recently, as was well known, he had resisted his chief in Cabinet,—an open rupture between them was imminently expected and had already been discounted in the gossip of the lobbies. And now, at the moment of critical decision, he had come out as his strongest and most effectual supporter. No further argument was required. That the treatment of a problem at a certain stage might cause differences which would be automatically obliterated in its further development was beside the point;—the champions counted in the public eye for far more than the causes which they represented. Reasons of a more or less fantastic character were adduced to account for the suddenness of the transformation. A hitherto unsuspected susceptibility to influence was

discovered in the Indian Secretary. He had been overborne,—outwitted,—bewitched. The Asian mystery had cast its spell upon him,—his feebler will had, at the given moment, been triumphantly bent to the purpose of the great Imperialist.

This diagnosis received confirmation from the change which did in effect take place in Lord Salisbury's relations with the Prime Minister during the weeks which immediately followed. Its process was hastened by certain peculiar conditions in Cabinet which will shortly be touched upon. But in itself it was induced by a very common human experience. Lord Salisbury was compelled by circumstances to trust his chief,—and found in fact that he could do so with impunity. Collaboration was the cause and not the result of the change of sentiment.

Its extent must not be exaggerated. He never recanted his opinion upon the '67 episode; some months after this date he referred to it in private conversation in language as strongly and sternly condemnatory as any that he had ever used. He himself accounted for the contradictions of his experience by the fundamentally different point of view from which Lord Beaconsfield regarded home and foreign affairs. Home politics—at least those by which parties were divided in the 'sixties—he never took seriously and he was mainly guided in them therefore by his personal or party ambitions. National and imperial politics he took very seriously. His aims in these were impersonal and based upon conviction, and those who worked with him found themselves upon solid ground.

That the disappearance of personal antipathy should have followed so quickly as it did upon that of public distrust calls perhaps for some further note. In truth it had been for some time more traditional

and assumed than spontaneous. It had begun to weaken from the time when the two men had come again into actual contact with one another in 1874. Lord Salisbury was not a good hater. He could be angry, and there were times when his anger blazed forth against individuals. But any element of personal resentment which it contained was slight and fugitive. After he had become the leader of his party, colleagues used to complain that he gave encouragement to disloyalty by his apparent incapacity to resent offences against himself. The distrust evoked by his experience in 1867 was genuinely enduring and it gave fictitious and, of late years, attenuated life to the emotions which had surrounded its birth. Once it was removed, these vanished automatically and were succeeded by the equable friendliness and tacit acceptance of differences which normally characterised his working relations with others. Intimacy there could not be,—traditions of taste and standards were too opposed,—but a distinctive touch of warmth was not wanting to the connection. In 1878, Lord Beaconsfield was an old man, declining in physical strength, faced with a task of extreme difficulty for dealing with which he lacked both the expert knowledge and the energy to acquire it. After he had been compelled to dissociate himself from Lord Derby, Lord Salisbury became the only man in his Cabinet upon whom he could rely for effectual assistance. He accepted the fact with an unqualified candour. The appeal of this dependence, constantly implied even when not expressly insisted on, with his frank display of gratitude for the allegiance, so long withheld, which had been offered him at a moment of such critical necessity, combined before many weeks were passed to call forth in the younger man, now in the prime of his

powers, an answering chivalry of support. He had come into touch for the first time with that generosity of personal confidence, that unstinted recognition of services rendered, which forms such a recurrently attractive feature in the story of Lord Beaconsfield's life.

In their actual working together there were no difficulties to overcome. The Prime Minister was only too willing to leave to his subordinate that free hand in initiation and action which his temperament required, and his Foreign Secretary—as he was soon to become—was equally ready to profit by the prolific ingenuity of suggestion, the gleams of insight amounting almost to inspiration, which characterised his leader's genius. A like quickness of apprehension, a like predominance of the sense of humour, ensured ease and smoothness in their official intercourse. But the strongest cement to the new understanding was the courage for which both men were pre-eminent. Lord Salisbury would comment admiringly upon his chief's quality in this respect. He found a constant refreshment in working with a man who never hampered counsel by hesitating doubts or shrinking avoidance of large decisions,—to whom defeat was only a challenge to further schemes for victory,—who flinched from no necessary risks and never sought to evade payment of a price already discounted for success. The satisfaction was mutual. Speaking to the present writer not long before his death, Lord Beaconsfield dwelt on the disabilities which he had suffered throughout his career from the timidity of colleagues. He mentioned one or two names, but said that the evil had been continuous. Never until now, at the end of his life, had he known what it was to work with a man of nerve. "You will find as you grow older," he insisted, "that courage is the rarest of all qualities to be found in public

men." "Your father," he repeated, "is the only man of real courage that it has ever been my lot to work with." And he dwelt emphatically on the strength and comfort which he had received from the experience.

With the suspension of hostilities and the arrest of the Russian advance, sensational incidents ceased in the Balkans. Except for the peace negotiations which were now being pressed forward between Russia and Turkey, there were few external signs of diplomatic activity during the next six weeks. Count Andrassy made proposals for the summoning of a Conference, and Prince Gortchakoff exercised his ingenuity in postponing consideration of them. Russian claims had to be strengthened by Turkey's acceptance of them before Europe could be allowed to interfere. On February 19, Prince Bismarck made a speech in the Reichstag which was canvassed eagerly, but to little profit, in every capital of Europe. He balanced delicately between the claims of his two neighbours, and in language apparently frank to the point of brutality, contrived to leave the world as ignorant as he found it as to his immediate intentions. He would take no side, he declared, in the differences which divided Russia and Austria, but aspired only to interpret between them as an "honest broker." Situated as Germany was in the centre of Europe, it behoved her to be cautious;—he should certainly think twice before imperilling the long-standing alliance,—so mutually profitable, —which existed between her and Russia. On the other hand, her relations with Austria were excellent, and a perfect confidence reigned between himself and Count Andrassy.

On the 3rd of March a Peace Treaty was signed

between Russia and Turkey at San Stefano—a village in the near neighbourhood of Constantinople. It was negotiated on the Russian side by Lord Salisbury's old acquaintance, General Ignatieff. Its most salient provision was the creation of a huge autonomous Bulgaria, stretching from the Danube to the Egean, and from the Black Sea to the frontiers of Albania. Whole districts peopled by Greeks and Southern Slavs were included in it, and the area which it would have covered was larger than any which Bulgaria has since actually occupied, even in her moments of most triumphant expansion. Adrianople was to be left to Turkey. So, nominally, was Salonika,—but since it was to be entirely isolated between the sea and the frontiers of the new autonomy, its eventual absorption was ensured. A lasting dependence on Russia was boldly prepared for. A Russian commission was to draw up the constitution of the new province and to organise its administration, and 50,000 Russian troops were to remain in occupation of it for two years.

The signing of this Treaty marked the high tide of Pan-Slavist influence at St. Petersburg. Except by the fanatics of that party, it was probably never looked upon as more than a claim to bargain with. There was reason to believe that, beneath its surface quiescence, continental diplomacy was already actively engaged upon that process. The auguries were not favourable for England, and as the months of February and March passed on they became increasingly ominous. Count Andrassy was nervous and depressed,—gloomily insistent upon Austria's risks,—showing an evergrowing reticence towards this country,—a reticence which he was not believed to be displaying elsewhere. The air was full of rumours ;—of a new activity in the correspondence between the three Emperors,—of German pressure

for an Austro-Russian agreement,—of the Emperor Francis Joseph's strong wish for it,—of Pan-Slavist boasts that it was already assured. Rumour, indeed, seemed to form the main substance of the information which reached the British Cabinet. They were as men standing behind closed doors through which came the murmur of conversations in which they had no part and whose purport they could only divine. Onlookers in the less interested capitals commented condolingly on the situation. Opinion on the Continent canvassed the chances between the only two possible issues,—an Anglo-Russian war or England's resigned acquiescence in Russia's recognised predominance at Constantinople and over all the regions of the Near East. There was no doubt in the minds of British Ministers as to which of these alternatives would follow if such an issue were ever forced upon their public. Unfortunately, Russian statesmen showed no signs of sharing in this conviction. "The only real danger," Lord Salisbury had written to a friend some weeks earlier, "is that Russians should fancy that Gladstone is master and should lose their heads in that belief."[1] If they could succeed in buying off Austrian opposition this danger would become imminent. A double dependence upon the oratory of Opposition leaders and the personality of the Foreign Secretary might at any moment betray Prince Gortchakoff into the offering of some irreparable provocation.

The anxiety with which Ministers contemplated the situation which was thus developing before their eyes was made more painful by a conviction that it had no foundation in the necessity of things. England ought not to fear diplomatic defeat;—the cards were all in her hands. With an exhausted

[1] To Mr. G. Sandford, January 29, 1878.

Russia, a reluctant Austria, a Germany genuinely anxious for a peaceful solution, she had only to assert herself actively,—to give full value to the essential strength of her position and the importance of her friendship,—to achieve every reasonable requirement of her policy. But the Cabinet realised with a growing dismay that, with the Foreign Office under its actual direction, these conditions were unattainable, and a curiously rapid change of feeling took place in those of its members who had recently been so anxious for Lord Derby's reinstatement.

His peculiar characteristics, intensified, no doubt, by the pressure upon him during the last two years, had long roused criticism among those who were intimately interested in the work of his department. Caution had developed into inertia ; Cabinet decisions were emasculated in the despatches which should have embodied them ; ambassadors were left without instructions,—foreign Governments without reply ; initiative had almost ceased, while even negotiations already engaged stumbled to a standstill amidst the silences of Downing Street. The reaction of feeling which converted the bulk of his colleagues to a conviction of his insufficiency may have been partly due to an aggravation of his physical condition, amounting almost to a state of nervous collapse, which followed upon the crisis of difficult decision through which he had just passed. But it was mainly to be attributed to the change of values created by the present emergency. Defects which in quiet times had been innocuous—which, so long as only a dexterous passivity was required, could be balanced against the high qualities of intellect by which they were accompanied, had become intolerable at a moment when a bold initiative was urgently called for.

Whatever the cause, in a marvellously short space of time Ministers became as one in deploring his presence and in recognising the catastrophe that threatened. They strove to avert it by an experiment which was probably unique in the history of Cabinets, —an organised attempt to carry on the business of the Foreign Office over the head of the Foreign Secretary. An inner Cabinet was formed to direct the activities of the rest. It consisted of the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, and Lord Cairns. Lord Salisbury supplied the expert knowledge in the association, and the almost continuous intimacy of counsel with his chief which it involved conduced to a rapid growth in their new sense of fellowship. Lord Cairns' inclusion was to his colleagues a matter of course. The estimation in which he was held by them was in striking contrast to the place which he occupied in the public eye. Both of the two now joined with him used to speak of him independently as being beyond all competitors within their acquaintance—not excluding each other—for strength and reach of intellect. Ordinarily indolent through delicate health and lack of ambition, he had been roused into activity on this occasion by a sense of national danger and by the extreme irritation which the Foreign Secretary's methods produced upon his forceful and strong-willed temper. These three men met together constantly, went through the messages which had been received from abroad since their last consultation, and decided upon the action to be recommended to their colleagues. This was then forced, by a unanimous Cabinet, upon the acceptance of the departmental chief. Sometimes Lord Cairns' talent for rapid and effective drafting was utilised in writing out in Cabinet the actual telegram or despatch which was to be sent in the Foreign Secretary's name. A curious

public used to wonder at the abnormal frequency and length of Cabinet councils which this procedure entailed and for which no adequate reason could be offered. The direct advantage achieved by it was probably small. Decision was hastened on some important issues,—vigour was imparted to a certain number of isolated communications; but only the barest outline of negotiation could be filled in. In no other department of State is the personal touch so essential as in the Foreign Office, and, however well inspired, no body of men acting indirectly could either convey or receive those subtleties of impression upon which a successful diplomacy depends.

But there was one aspect of the experiment which soon became its sufficient justification in the eyes of a desperate Cabinet. The position which it created for the Foreign Secretary was such as must soon compel his resignation. His more impatient colleagues made no secret, even in his presence, of their growing indignation at its postponement, and incidents occurred which grated upon Lord Salisbury's sense of personal courtesy, however much he may have sympathised with the feeling which produced them. It was a feeling open to criticism. Lord Derby was undoubtedly within his rights in retaining office until issue was actually joined on a decision of action, and his persistence at the cost of great personal mortification in obstructing as long as possible courses which he held to be reckless and dangerous might be acclaimed as an act of high patriotism. But his colleagues could not view it in that light and deeply resented his remaining with them for the purpose of hampering a policy upon which they were all agreed. Personal relations became painfully embittered during those weeks of unpublished struggle.

The Constitution had provided a way out of the

difficulty. The Prime Minister could have called for his colleague's resignation, and Lord Salisbury at the time censured him strongly for not doing so. He alone had the power,—he could not divest himself of it,—his neglect to use it must make him responsible for any catastrophe that might ensue. But Lord Derby was almost his oldest friend in the Cabinet, and though he no longer wished for his retention, he could not bring himself to the brutality of dismissing him. To Lord Salisbury himself this period was one of nightmare oppression in which his spirits sank to the lowest ebb. "We shall be handed down in history," he despairingly exclaimed, "as the Government which through sheer incompetence plunged Europe into the greatest war of the century."

Happily the climax was reached before the mischief had become irreparable. It came through a diplomatic breach with Russia which, though serious, was not final. With the signature of the San Stefano Treaty all reason for postponing the Conference had disappeared. There had been difficulties as to the place of meeting, but now Prince Gortchakoff himself proposed Berlin for the purpose. Count Andrassy concurred and Prince Bismarck consented to preside. As the Austrian and Russian Chancellors also announced their intention of being present, the projected assemblage became raised to the dignity of a Congress and appears under that title in all subsequent communications. A circular was issued from Vienna inviting the assent of the other Powers to the proposal. The British Government replied on March 8, stating the condition upon which its participation must depend. All questions dealt with in the Treaty just signed at San Stefano must be included as subject to discussion. Russia replied that she would accept

discussion on all points which were of European interest, but on those alone,—without specifying the authority which should distinguish between the two categories. England insisted,—but restated the terms of her demand. All the articles of the Treaty must be laid before Congress in order that it might determine which of them required its consideration and which did not. That was on the 13th. No direct reply was received to this,—further communications were interchanged,—but for nearly a fortnight the Russian Government continued to fence with the question.

While this diplomatic duel was in progress the attitude of the rest of Europe was such as to justify the gloomiest forecasts. Not a single Power ranged itself openly on England's side. Acquiescence in the Russian claim was accepted as inevitable in Berlin and Rome, and — more reluctantly — in Paris. The Austrian Government actively urged submission to it,—which was the more remarkable because the principle for which England was contending—that of Europe's right to full consultation and final decision—was the one which Austria herself had from the first proclaimed to be essential. If she was willing now to leave it unsecured it must be because of other and more private dependencies. The conclusion had to be faced that England was isolated in Europe, and that if the tendencies now revealed were to continue an early agreement between the three Empires might be looked for in which her interests would be wholly ignored.

At length, on March 21, the British Government demanded from St. Petersburg a categorical acceptance or rejection of the conditions which it had laid down. The Treaty of San Stefano had never yet been officially communicated to it, but its contents were well known,

and on this same day Lord Beaconsfield wrote to his colleague to suggest that the Cabinet should proceed at once to its consideration. Lord Salisbury agreed, and proceeded to sketch the policy, both as towards the immediate issue and the eventual settlement, which he proposed that they should follow.

To Lord Beaconsfield, March 21, 1878.

"I see no difficulty about considering the Treaty on Saturday as you say. We ought to prepare ourselves, in case there is *no* Congress, to state which are the articles of the Treaty to which we specially object.

"Of course, we have a right to object to all, as all are contrary to existing Treaties, but it would be doubtful policy to do so in view of English opinion. At all events, I think we should put in the forefront of our objections :

"(1) Those articles which menace the balance of power in the Egean.

"(2) Those which threaten the Greek race in the Balkan Peninsula with extinction.

And that we should indicate the necessity of either cancelling, *or* meeting with compensatory provisions, the portions of the Treaty which, by reducing Turkey to vassalage, threaten the free passage of the Straits, and also menace English interests in other places where the exercise of Turkish authority affects them.

"I am, as you know, not a believer in the possibility of setting the Turkish Government on its legs again, as a genuine reliable Power ; and, unless you have a distinct belief the other way, I think you should be cautious about adopting any line of policy which may stake England's security in those seas on Turkish efficiency. I should be disposed to be satisfied with war or negotiations which ended in these results :

"(1) Driving back the Slav State to the Balkans—

and substituting a Greek province; politically, but not administratively, under the Porte.

"(2) Effective securities for the free passage of the Straits at all times, as if they were open sea.

"(3) Two naval stations for England—say Lemnos and Cyprus, with an occupation, at least temporary, of some place like Scanderoon; for the sake of moral effect.

"(4) Perhaps I would add reduction of indemnity to amount which there would be reasonable prospect of Turkey paying without giving pretext for fresh encroachments.

"These are merely suggestions for your consideration—and require no answer."

The first of these requirements was adhered to continuously and in detail until it became embodied in the Berlin Treaty. The second had a less even and a less successful history. The third was to reappear finally in an attenuated form as one branch of the Anglo-Turkish Convention. It represented no new idea. The acquisition of some strategic post as a means of securing England's influence in the Eastern seas had been under discussion in Cabinet for the whole of that month.[1] It had been in the thoughts of the writer of this letter for a longer period. More than a year before, when he was at Constantinople, he had discussed it as a step desirable to be taken in the event of the Turkish Empire's collapsing. Colonel Home, an officer of the Intelligence Department, in whom he had great confidence, and who was at Constantinople at the time, had suggested Cyprus—or it had turned up in conversation between them—and the idea had so far developed that Lord Salisbury had instructed him to explore and report upon the island from this point of view,—instructions which

[1] *Life of Disraeli*, vol. vi. pp. 253-256.

were never carried out, owing to the officer's being called elsewhere. After the Anglo-Turkish Convention was concluded, he wrote to congratulate Lord Salisbury upon the achievement, and the latter, in his reply, recalled their earlier discussions. "Cyprus was the acquisition upon which your mind was originally bent, and now that we can judge the matter as an accomplished fact, I am heartily glad that your advice prevailed and that we did not touch either Crete or Alexandretta." [1]

But, in this month of March, it was the port on the mainland that seems chiefly to have occupied his mind. On the 20th, the day before writing to Lord Beaconsfield, he was sending a note to Colonel Home asking him to come to the India Office "to consult about the coast of Syria." The immediate despatch of a mission of inspection to those parts was apparently decided on at this interview, as, on the 21st, he reports in a second note having obtained the consent of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for War to an officer recommended by Colonel Home being sent out:—"the sooner, therefore, he starts the better." He was to travel under the auspices of the India Office, his movements thus being kept under Lord Salisbury's personal direction,—and no one had been informed of his destination except the chief of the Indian Political Department and the two Cabinet Ministers mentioned.

If any measures were to be taken to meet a breakdown of the present negotiations with Russia, there was certainly no time to be lost. On the 25th, the possibility of "no Congress" suggested in Lord Salisbury's letter had become an actuality. Prince Gortchakoff abandoned all evasions in his reply to

[1] To Colonel Robert Home, R.E., August 5, 1878.

the latest British challenge. He recognised that other Governments would be free to raise what points they thought proper for discussion at the Congress, but claimed for his own Government a corresponding liberty, in all cases, to refuse such discussion. An incident which had just been reported showed how fully this claim was intended to be effectual. Roumania had protested vehemently at St. Petersburg,—and was prepared to protest before Europe,—against a clause in the Treaty of San Stefano which bound her to cede Bessarabia to Russia on consideration of receiving the Dobrudscha from Turkey in exchange. She was tartly informed not only that she must submit to the provision, but that Prince Gortchakoff had no intention of allowing it to be brought before Congress at all. The issue was thus defined; Russia categorically refused the condition upon which England insisted. Prince Bismarck had already declared that he would issue no invitations to a Congress until the attendance of all signatories to the Treaty of Paris had been ensured; its meeting was, therefore, postponed *sine die* and a new and perilous phase in the crisis opened.

Each country was now free to resume separate and independent action. Nothing was sure as to the intentions of other Powers except that they would not meet the situation passively. For the British Cabinet, therefore, the moment for crucial decisions had arrived. The immediate risk of a breach with Russia had to be faced, and the injury threatened to England's influence in Asia and in the Levant had to be prepared against. The first necessity was to warn the moderate party at St. Petersburg that the ground was dangerous. The calling out of the Reserves—the first step towards mobilisation—would be effective for that purpose. A crisis, calling for

the immediate realisation of those plans for strategical occupation which the Cabinet had been considering, might now at any moment become imminent, and the despatch of a military force to the Mediterranean was a precaution evidently suggested. It was proposed to provide this force from the Indian Army. Secrecy, or rather silence, was at this stage essential. The emergency for which preparation was being made, depending as it did upon the still uncertain course of continental diplomacy, was undefined, —might never arise, and in no case admitted of public discussion beforehand. The expedition of a force from England would have involved an announcement to Parliament, with the certainty of a controversial debate. Indian troops could be moved by a simple order of the executive. Ministers were severely censured afterwards for having had recourse to this expedient. It was argued that they had deliberately and surreptitiously withdrawn from Parliament a control which had been reserved to it under the Constitution. Repeatedly dwelt upon with fiery eloquence and denounced as an outrage upon civil liberty, this measure probably went for much in their ultimate loss of popular favour. They suffered in this respect from their subsequent diplomatic success. If the emergency which they then dreaded had actually arisen, any effectual preparation made to meet it would have been but little criticised on the ground of constitutional impropriety. That the proposal had been for some days under consideration appears from an allusion in the correspondence with Colonel Home which has been already quoted from. Lord Salisbury writes that he has been making enquiries as to how long it would take to transport 20,000 men from Bombay to Malta, and wishes to know whether his correspondent agrees with the

estimate given.[1] The fact that the expedition would have to be organised by his department and its activities after it reached Europe be under his direction probably weighed with the Cabinet in its favour, —may, indeed, have first suggested it to their minds. It would have been another step in the process of extricating foreign affairs from the control of the Foreign Secretary.

But the need for such ingenuities was soon to disappear. Lord Derby had agreed in principle with his colleagues in the negotiations of the past fortnight. He preferred, as he subsequently told the House of Lords, that the Congress should not meet at all rather than that it should meet without a full understanding as to the extent of its powers. He was prepared for the negative conclusion but not for the positive action which, in the opinion of the rest of the Cabinet, it entailed. On March 27 the Cabinet met, having received formal intimation of the Russian reply. The calling out of the Reserves was decided; the movement of Indian troops was also decided in substance though it waited final enactment; the work to which they should be put after they reached Europe was discussed with general agreement but was not decided, and was intended to remain essentially dependent upon the intermediate course of events on the continent. Such at least was the position as it appeared later in the recollection of the bulk of the Cabinet. Lord Derby, who resigned the same evening in consequence of these decisions, received a different and more definite impression. As he disapproved impartially of all the measures suggested and would have resigned upon the adoption

[1] To Colonel Home, March 21, 1878. Lord Beaconsfield writing to the Queen on March 16 alludes briefly to "expeditions from India" having been discussed in Cabinet (*Life*, vol. vi. p. 259). Lord Salisbury, we may assume, started these enquiries then.

of any one of them, the difference was without practical importance. But it led later to a public dispute between him and Lord Salisbury which requires to be touched upon. It will be better perhaps to deal with it here rather than in its strict chronological order.

In announcing his resignation in the House of Lords, he refrained from entering upon its causes in detail, but alluded mysteriously to proposed measures of a "grave and important character" which were in his eyes unnecessary and imprudent and in which issues of peace or war would be involved.[1] His action was generally attributed to the decision to call out the Reserves which was made public the same evening, and Lord Beaconsfield implied as much in his responding speech. Lord Derby demurred to this inference and, ten days later, took occasion to refer again and more pointedly to further sinister schemes, not yet revealed. At the same time, in defence of his own impugned consistency, he explained how qualified had been his approval of earlier actions of the Government to which he had given his consent. Lord Salisbury, speaking in reply, protested against these confessions, controlling himself—though with difficulty—to a discreet silence upon the hints which had preceded them.

"For all that passes in Cabinet each member of it who does not resign is absolutely and irretrievably responsible, and has no right afterwards to say that he agreed in one case to a compromise, while in another he was persuaded by one of his colleagues. . . . It is only on the principle that absolute responsibility is undertaken by every member of a Cabinet who, after a decision is arrived at, remains a member of it, that the joint responsibility of Ministers

[1] Hansard, March 28, 1878.

to Parliament can be upheld, and one of the most essential conditions of parliamentary responsibility established." (*Hansard, April 8, 1878.*)

The Indian troops were transported to Malta and in due time the secret of their movement became public property. But the further proposals which had been before the Cabinet in March never materialised. Cyprus, it is true, was eventually occupied—but peaceably and by agreement as part of the Anglo-Turkish Convention. After the publication of that instrument, Lord Derby seems to have thought himself at liberty to disburden his memory fully. On the 18th of July he announced in the House of Lords that at the last Cabinet meeting at which he had been present it had been decided that the seizure of Cyprus and of some point on the Syrian coast had become necessary, and that it should be effected—with or without the Sultan's consent—by means of a secret naval expedition. This account, besides the breach of confidence involved, was, according to the unanimous recollection of his late colleagues, an overstatement of the facts. Taken in conjunction with the hinted revelations in his earlier speeches,—and no doubt also with the old causes of resentment whose memory it evoked,—it roused in them a great indignation. Lord Salisbury, to whom it fell to follow him in debate, was not among the least angry. At such times there was little outward show of the feeling that moved him. Those who knew him intimately could recognise the sombre gleam in his eyes, the shadow which darkened his face. But his manner and delivery changed only in being rather more impassive than usual. The motionless figure, the lowered voice compelling a strained silence of attention, the slow, incisive enunciation with which each phrase of irony or sarcasm was pointed, were

perhaps more effectively expressive of their purpose than any thunderous outburst of wrath. The phrases on this occasion were few and soon spoken. He congratulated the House upon the advantage which it had recently enjoyed of " revelations from the dark interior of the Cabinet." Every speech which Lord Derby had made since his resignation had contained a fresh instalment of the fatal tale. The method was not without precedent. " The same objection was made to Dr. Oates when he brought forward successive fragments of his disclosures. When taunted with the fact, his answer was that he did not know how much the public would endure." There was a briefly disdainful allusion to the breach of confidence,—" My noble friend must please himself in the matter,"—and then a quotation of Lord Derby's statement, followed by the comment, spoken with a contrasting sharpness of emphasis, that it was " not true." The more parliamentary form of " not correct " was substituted in response to cries of protest from the Opposition benches, and then a list was read out of those colleagues whose evidence he had been able to collect since the charge was made and who were all prepared to echo his denial. Two Ministers from the Lower House, Sir Stafford Northcote and Mr. W. H. Smith, stood together on the steps of the Throne listening to Lord Derby's statement, and a bystander overheard and still remembers the quick, indignant " It's perfectly untrue ! " " What does he mean ? " with which the two commoners greeted it. Later in the evening Lord Salisbury denied having charged Lord Derby with untruthfulness and withdrew any phrase or " simile " which might have seemed to convey such an imputation. The general appeal with which he closed his protest was in fact founded on the contrary assumption. Such disclosures were intolerable, not

because they were avoidably inaccurate, but because they could not help being so. He entreated the House to support him in condemning them.

"It is obvious that these revelations as to conversations that have passed and of which no record is made, must in the nature of things be exposed to error, especially in an assembly which very seldom takes a definite and clear decision until the time for action arrives. All kinds of contingencies are spoken of, all possible policies are discussed, and it is quite possible that my noble friend may have heard some project discussed by this member of the Cabinet or by that. For my part, I cannot charge my memory with what my noble friend alludes to, but certain it is that no such resolution as that which he has spoken of was, in their recollection, taken by the Cabinet." (*Hansard, July 18, 1878.*)

The next day, in a note to Sir Stafford Northcote, he suggested the same explanation :

To Sir Stafford Northcote, July 19, 1878.

"The real state of the case was that, if Derby had stated that the policy he sketched had been proposed or suggested in conversation by one or two members of the Cabinet, he would have been near the truth—though he would have been wrong in stating that any definite proposal for seizure without the consent of the Sultan was made. But no resolution of the Cabinet was come to except that the Indian troops should be brought to Malta, and it was on that (as we understood it) and the calling out of the Reserves that he resigned."

Even this recollection implied a greater definiteness of decision than some of the evidence pointed to. A day or two later Lord Salisbury found among his papers a fragment of paper which had been used at this Cabinet meeting for an interchange of messages

between himself and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. On it in his own handwriting was a question as to whether the Imperial Exchequer would pay the cost of the expedition, and underneath it, in that of his more cautious colleague, a deprecating question as to the expedition having been decided on at all. "I am not opposed to it in principle, but I think we ought to have more than ten minutes to decide on it."

This incident, apart from the soreness of feeling with which circumstances had surrounded it, was typical of many others that have arisen through a disregard of what Lord Salisbury always held to be a fundamental requirement of the Cabinet system. Originating in a spontaneous gathering of friends, legally unrecognised, it had inherited a tradition of freedom and informality which was in his eyes indispensable to its efficiency. A Cabinet discussion was not the occasion for the deliverance of considered judgements but an opportunity for the pursuit of practical conclusions. It could only be made completely effective for this purpose if the flow of suggestions which accompanied it attained the freedom and fulness which belong to private conversations—members must feel themselves untrammelled by any consideration of consistency with the past or self-justification in the future. The convention which forbade any note being taken of what was said,—futile as a safeguard for secrecy,—was invaluable as a guarantee for this irresponsible licence in discussion. Lord Salisbury would have extended it in principle to the record preserved in each man's memory. The first rule of Cabinet conduct, he used to declare, was that no member should ever "Hansardise" another,—ever compare his present contribution to the common fund of counsel with a previously expressed opinion. Any record kept of the discussions

must gravely restrict this invaluable liberty;—if public reference to them were ever to be tolerated, it must disappear.

There was one consideration not alluded to in the House of Lords debate, which might help to account for the different impressions left upon the minds of Lord Derby and of his colleagues on this occasion. The change in the diplomatic situation—dramatic in its rapidity—which followed upon his retirement had vitally affected this particular issue. In the first letter which Lord Salisbury addressed as Foreign Minister to his ambassador at Constantinople,[1]—on April 4,—he alluded to a transfer of Turkish territory to England in language which belonged already to a different world from that in which the sensational projects of Lord Derby's statement had being;—commending the subject in a general way to his correspondent's thoughts as one for diplomatic approach to the Porte at some later and still undetermined date. The hurried action, the naval expedition, the forcible occupation,—had vanished into thin air. The proposals which the retiring Minister treated as decisions—and which might probably have become decisions had the same conditions continued—did not, in fact, even as proposals, survive his withdrawal a single week. It is not to be wondered at that his colleagues should have repudiated their claim to a more definite quality with indignant certainty. The picture which had remained vivid in his mind, unblurred by subsequent impressions, had been effaced from theirs almost as soon as it had been presented.

It was the part which Lord Salisbury took in this sudden transformation that first established his reputation as Foreign Minister.

[1] See below, p. 264.

CHAPTER VII

THE EASTERN QUESTION, 1878

THE NEGOTIATION OF THE SETTLEMENT

THERE was no delay in effecting the transfer of offices after Lord Derby's second withdrawal. Lord Salisbury's appointment was submitted to the Queen with his predecessor's resignation ; was approved the same day and forthwith made public. Lord Cranbrook succeeded him at the India Office, and Colonel Stanley, Lord Derby's brother and the heir to his peerage, entered the Cabinet as Secretary of State for War. The seals were not exchanged until the following week, but Lord Salisbury did not wait to be formally invested before acting upon his new authority. The postponement of the Congress had produced a crisis of apprehension throughout Europe which made even the briefest interregnum at the Foreign Office impossible. For the first few days the new Minister had to grapple with problems of high policy in the intervals left between handing over Indian business to his successor, selecting a personal staff, learning a new routine, undergoing innumerable interviews of farewell and introduction. But no burden of work could outweigh the relief of being able at last to take action on his own initiative and responsibility. In one respect he was peculiarly fortunate,—he was not hampered by the ignorance which disables most incoming Ministers. For weeks he had been infor-

mally occupied, even in its details, with the business which was now officially his own. He was fortunate also in the moment of his arrival at power. Negotiations had reached a dead point,—a new departure had become imperative, and no foreign Government had as yet committed itself in the changed conditions. The ministerial crisis in London had probably been anticipated in the gossip of embassy reports, and continental statesmen were awaiting its outcome. The word was admittedly with England, and it only remained for Lord Salisbury to make use of his opportunity.

On the evening after his appointment—that of Friday the 29th—he was dining out in fulfilment of an old engagement. Lady Salisbury was going on to some other social entertainment and he asked that the carriage should take him home first. He had to submit a despatch to Cabinet the next morning,—he had not as yet had time to write a word of it,—and it was already 11 o'clock. According to his custom whenever concentrated attention was required, he locked himself in behind double doors, and when the ladies of his family returned in the small hours of the morning they found the outer barrier still closed. The next day he appeared at breakfast tired but satisfied. He had not got to bed till three o'clock,—but he had finished his despatch. It was considered at Cabinet that morning and passed. "I think," reported one of his colleagues, "that I suggested the omission of a superfluous 'it'—and that was as important an alteration as was made by any of us." On Monday it was telegraphed out, either verbatim or in substance, to the capitals of Europe, and became famous as the Salisbury Circular of April 1.[1]

[1] It will be seen that the main propositions upon which the Circular was founded had been laid down a week before in Lord Salisbury's letter to the Prime Minister on March 21 (see above, p. 213).

It is not a long document; exclusive of the recital of recent negotiations with which it opens, it contains some fifteen hundred words. The formal occasion of its issue was to explain the refusal of England to enter the Congress until the Russian Government had withdrawn its reservations. She was moved in the first place by respect for public law. So late as in 1871, in connection with this very question, the chief European Governments had signed a solemn declaration binding them to the principle "that no Power can liberate itself from the terms of a Treaty without the consent of the other contracting Powers." Every material stipulation of the Treaty of San Stefano involved a breach of the Treaty of Paris; not one could be withdrawn from the cognisance of the Powers which had guaranteed that settlement without falsifying the pledge taken. But the objections of the British Government were not only formal and legal. The Treaty must be submitted as a whole, because it was as a whole—in the balance and cumulative effect of its several parts—that its true significance lay. The main body of the despatch was devoted to arguing this thesis.

The principal stipulations were passed rapidly in review and the results which they were designed to secure were pointed out. Populations alien to one another in nationality, in political tendency and in religious allegiance were to be merged in a great Slav State stretching from sea to sea. Its immediate control and ultimate constitution were provided for in a fashion which sufficiently indicated the political system of which it was intended to form a part, while subsidiary provisions of the Treaty emphasised the unjustifiable pre-eminence prepared for it. Such an emergence of Slav dominion on the shores of the Egean must fatally arrest the development of the

Greek race in the Peninsula and would injuriously affect the position of every country having maritime interests in the Levant. Meanwhile, the eastern seaboard further secured to this State—the retrocession of Bessarabia,—the annexation of Batoum and of the Armenian strongholds, must tend to make the power of Russia dominant also over all the vicinity of the Black Sea. The indemnity, which was admittedly beyond the power of Turkey to discharge, and the payment of which was left to be the subject of ulterior negotiations, would constitute an added instrument for her continued coercion.

But all these probable or possible fruits of the proposed Treaty were subsidiary to the evil on which the writer wished specially to insist. The passage which follows contains the gist of his argument :

" Objections may be urged individually against these various stipulations ; and arguments, on the other hand, may possibly be advanced to show that they are not individually inconsistent with the attainment of the lasting peace and stability which it is the highest object of all present negotiations to establish in the provinces of European and Asiatic Turkey. But their separate and individual operation, whether defensible or not, is not that which should engage the most earnest attention of the Signatory Powers. Their combined effect, in addition to the results upon the Greek population and upon the balance of maritime power which have already been pointed out, is to suppress, almost to the point of entire subjection, the political independence of the Government of Constantinople. The formal jurisdiction of that Government extends over geographical positions which must, under all circumstances, be of the deepest interest to Great Britain. It is in the power of the Ottoman Government to close or to open the Straits which form the natural highway of nations between the Egean Sea and the Euxine. Its

dominion is recognised at the head of the Persian Gulf, on the shores of the Levant, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the Suez Canal. It cannot be otherwise than a matter of extreme solicitude to this country that the Government to which this jurisdiction belongs should be so closely pressed by the political outposts of a greatly superior Power that its independent action, and even existence, is almost impossible. These results arise not so much from the language of any single article in the Treaty as from the operation of the instrument as a whole. A discussion limited to the articles selected by one Power in the Congress would be an illusory remedy for the danger to English interests and to the permanent peace of Europe which would result from the state of things which the Treaty proposes to establish."

He concludes by guarding himself against a too extreme application of his argument. The solution aimed at in the Constantinople Conference,—by which, with a reform of its administration, the ancient limits of the Turkish Empire would have been preserved,—had become impossible. Large changes it was admitted would now be required, and England was earnestly desirous, as she always had been, to secure " good government, assured peace and freedom, for populations to whom these blessings had been strange."

Some months later, in private conversation, Count Andrassy described his sensations on the appearance of this despatch. He had been sunk, he said, in despair ;—a world-war was approaching from which he could see no escape. His secretaries brought him news of the change at the London Foreign Office, —a gleam of light showed in the darkness ! They placed the Circular in his hands,—he knew that Europe was saved ! It is as well, perhaps, to add that this characteristic ebullition was addressed to a

member of Lord Salisbury's family. But the dramatic representation of the Hungarian Chancellor only exaggerated a very general appreciation. The Circular produced a deep impression throughout Europe, both among the outside public and among those responsible for government. Few State papers have had such immediate influence upon opinion and action. The undue depreciation of England which had preceded its appearance no doubt contributed to its success. Some of this was also due to the form in which it was clothed. It appealed both to the unofficial public, repelled by diplomatic verbiage, and to professional experts suspicious of popular rhetoric. The traditional language of diplomacy is cumbrous and evasive by intention,—its literary defects are clung to as barriers against the pitfalls which surround international intercourse. Lord Salisbury succeeded in dispensing with their protection and escaping the penalty. The Circular was held to have achieved a rare combination of vigorous lucidity with such suggestiveness and reticence of phrasing as would have satisfied the most cautious protocolist.

But its actual influence upon events was determined by its substance rather than by its wording. It offered solid foothold to a diplomacy which had lost itself in a bog of insincerity and intrigue. The concentration of its criticism upon a single point—the covert appropriation by Russia of the influence inherent in Turkish sovereignty—simplified the issue to be resolved. On the other hand its very insistence upon challenging the Treaty as a whole opened the door widely for negotiation, since it excluded no single provision in it from being a possible subject for accommodation. Political opponents in England denounced the despatch as incendiary, and Pan-Slavists met it with angry defiance. But Russian

statesmen outside that party early recognised the invitation to negotiate which it conveyed. At the same time, by implication rather than by direct approach, the co-operation of other neutral States was tacitly appealed for. Each found its meed in some application of the challenge thrown down. France and Italy hailed its defence of the Mediterranean *status quo*,—Germany and Austria its protest against the extension of Slav domination. Though it claimed only to speak for British rights and interests it was greeted abroad as an offer of championship to Europe. Its appearance was followed by a rapid transformation in the continental attitude towards this country. She was still recognised as standing apart,—in this very utterance she had sought no support through preliminary consultation with others. But the isolation which had hitherto witnessed to the indifference of other nations, dangerously verging of late upon contempt, now appeared as a circumstance of leadership. A week or two later Count Andrassy was plaintively noting that though Austrian interests were those most immediately involved, England was now treated everywhere as the neutral Power to be first consulted. In fact, from this date until the Congress met at Berlin, the course of European diplomacy became almost continuously sequent upon action initiated in Downing Street.

In an appreciation of Lord Salisbury's work as Foreign Minister, delivered shortly after his death, Lord Rosebery spoke of his achievement during those three months as the most brilliant in his career. Lord Salisbury's own references to the subject were in curious contrast to this view. Discussing it in conversational retrospect two years later: "I never wish," he said, "for my foreign policy to be judged by my action in '78. I was only picking up the china

that Derby had broken." Any policy to be worth having should have been decided upon in '75 when the trouble first began, carefully prepared and steadily pursued from that date. "I had to do in three months what ought to have taken three years to accomplish." The Government had been like a man travelling along a mountain ridge and slipping gradually down its slope until, in the spring of '78, they had reached the verge of the precipice. His own action, he declared—sensational even in its success—had represented the desperate struggles required to regain the level ground whose foothold ought never to have been lost.

The criticism was characteristic;—in his later administrations long-prepared and concentrated purpose was of the essence of his policy. It is manifestly impossible, in view of this judgement, to treat his conduct of this crisis as an example of his statesmanship. Its interest must lie mainly in its expression of his more purely diplomatic powers, though, even so, exercised under conditions which he repudiated. His own conception of a perfect diplomacy was always of one whose victories come without observation. But, from a biographical point of view, it is perhaps a matter for congratulation that his gifts in this respect should have been tested at the outset of his career by a situation more desperate than he would ever have suffered to arise had he been in continuous command.

Much of the material for the following account is drawn from his private correspondence with his ambassadors. It has often been said that he conducted his diplomacy largely through this medium. An inspection of the letters hardly bears this out. Except in one or two instances they comment upon instructions rather than convey them and are of

more interest biographically than historically. But, incidentally, they throw a valuable light upon his administrative methods.

He was by no means an ideal chief, though he satisfied some requirements of the character. His personal relations with those who worked under him were throughout of an unclouded friendliness,—in many instances a warmer description would be justified. He left the permanent chiefs of his department in practically full control of its minor affairs;—his industry was not the product of any interest in detail as such. While taking full cognisance of everything, and resenting efforts to withdraw even the most unimportant matters altogether from his notice, he interfered very little in their decision. Occasionally, in the red ink reserved for the Secretary of State's contributions, there would appear on the docket, underneath the decorous suggestions of under-secretaries or heads of department, some briefly ironic and unconventionally worded comment. But that was all. As towards his personal staff he had certain idiosyncrasies which made service difficult. His courtesy, though it won their hearts, added complications to his relations with them. In some ways he expected too much from them,—but he claimed nothing from them as of right. He would seldom explain how he wanted a thing done,—assuming, so his wife used to declare of him, a special inspiration in those who worked for him,—but he still more rarely complained if it was not done to his liking. Failure would only be realised by his silently doing the task himself on the next occasion. His sensitiveness to even the possibility of interruption has been spoken of. His private secretaries' right of entrance to his working room, necessary as it was to the fulfilment of their duties, was a constant

source of affliction to him. But to tell them so would have been uncivil, and he therefore had recourse to various ingenious expedients for eluding them. He would transfer his work to unexpected rooms where they would not be likely to look for him,—devise reasons requiring their presence at the Office while he remained at home ;—or excuses for detaining them in London while he escaped to Hatfield. Those who had served him long enough for comprehension would try tactfully to second his efforts—keeping out of his way as much as possible and making surreptitious assaults upon his papers during his temporary absences. It was a game of hide-and-seek between chief and staff comically incongruous to their avowed relations.

But his real defect, and one which was a cause of chronic complaint among all those who worked for him, was his unwillingness or incapacity to delegate responsibility, even of the most limited kind, in the larger questions which he kept in his own hands. He must not only direct a policy, he must take every step in its pursuit. He must himself consult the original sources of information and select the facts on which to base his action, and must then decide upon it without the disturbance even of suggestion from outside. He once asked one of his sons whether, when occupied with some problem, he really found any of the advantage generally claimed for " talking it over " with a friend,—and was evidently surprised at being answered in the affirmative. For himself, he said, until his mind was clear upon a point, he much preferred not to speak of it to any one—the intrusion of other men's ideas at that stage was only confusing to him. In the same way, when a decision had been come to, it must be defined in his own language and pressed upon the acceptance of others

by his own arguments. At no stage did he seem capable of profiting by the assistance which a public man generally expects from his staff. This pervading and exclusive self-dependence was a real misfortune. Acting under material limitations of time and physical strength, it compelled him to ignore matters in which — especially after he became Prime Minister — his interposition would have been useful, and, through the constant strain which it imposed upon his faculties, it probably shortened the period of his intellectual prime if not of his life itself.

He was continually being remonstrated with on this subject and his answer was always the same. If he had more leisure he might devolve his work—as it was he was too busy not to do it himself. His diplomatic correspondence helps to elucidate the paradox of this defence. During this period of his first administration its output was large. Letters of from four to ten or twelve quarto pages, written throughout with his own hand, were sent out by nearly every mail to all capitals in which negotiation was active and at less frequent intervals to others. They were not concerned only with seeking and giving information;—they were vehicles rather for intimate consultation with his ambassadors. Speculation is offered and invited in them as to the true motives and underlying forces which are at work, or as to the end towards which events are tending; the advantages of alternative courses are discussed, the decisions come to are explained, and the objects aimed at are defined in terms evidently chosen to meet the special susceptibilities of the correspondent addressed. In some cases, where disagreement with his policy is suspected, its merits are argued repeatedly and at length in successive letters. A persuasive and educative intention is recurrently apparent,—a constant

effort to secure from his agents not only an intelligent but a sympathetic co-operation.

It was an effort involving a very considerable addition to his work,—superimposed as these letters were upon the continuous flow of telegrams and despatches by which his instructions were formally conveyed. He was induced to it by contrasting elements in his character which are not often found in combination and which largely influenced his general relations with his subordinates. Many men of strong personality find it impossible, as he did, to allow the intrusion upon their work of independent points of view. But such men are usually possessed of a certain autocracy of temper which requires, and which indeed assumes as a matter of course, that the mentality of those who work under them should be but an echo of their own. Lord Salisbury's temper was the reverse of autocratic. The claim to independence which he made for himself he always expected and allowed in others. It was the dominant note of his party leadership in later years. He himself would have said that he had no alternative. His persistent scepticism as to his powers of personal influence made it as impossible for him to expect intellectual self-effacement from his subordinates as he was unwilling to exact it. Yet he remained instinctively intolerant of co-operation separately inspired. Under these circumstances, if they were to co-operate with him at all, his only resource was to imbue them rationally with his own point of view. With these representatives abroad, whose collaboration he had to accept, he adopted that course. But in these conditions his plea becomes comprehensible that, wherever it was possible, it involved less labour to do the work himself than to share it with others.

Complementary to his insistence on exclusive

direction was a readiness to surrender direction altogether when it could better be entrusted to other hands. "Never jog a man's elbow when he is holding the reins," was a favourite maxim. In his work at the Foreign Office it was necessarily of rare application. His relations with Lord Cromer in Egypt were a case in point, but more illustrative because not associated with such an exceptional personality was an incident which belonged also to a much later date than the events now under consideration. It occurred in connection with Zanzibar before British control had become complete there. An emergency had arisen with the suddenness familiar in half-barbarous countries ;—a palace revolution,—the insurgence of a fanatical mob,—a small white colony placed in immediate danger during the hours that must elapse before a hastily summoned man-of-war could reach the coast. Hurried decisions had to be taken between alternative courses of menace, negotiation, compromise. The British representative was absent on leave and a young and quite untried official was in command. He telegraphed his news home with his suggestions as to the way in which the emergency was to be met, and waited, according to his own subsequent account, in acute anxiety for the reply. What could a subordinate of his known inexperience expect from authority conscious of the imperial interests which it represented and of the necessity for preparing beforehand for its own parliamentary defence ? Non-committal advice, carefully balanced, impracticably correct,—coupled probably with warnings as to the responsibility which would be incurred by any failure of achievement on the one hand or lack of caution displayed on the other. The burden was already heavy,—such a response would make it overwhelming. But the telegram found Lord

Salisbury on his holiday in France and the answer was flashed back in his own characteristically direct language : " Do whatever you think best. Whatever you do will be approved,—but be careful not to undertake anything which you cannot carry through." Twenty years later the recipient[1] could not speak without emotion of the courage and strength inspired by this challenge of a trust without reserve.

Whatever their reaction in other directions, Lord Salisbury's methods with his subordinates could claim success in their immediate object. He was well served within the limits which he himself prescribed. There were qualities in him which compelled affection and induced his staff at home, in spite of all obstacles raised against them, to give him of their best. During his later administrations the volume of his correspondence with his diplomatists sensibly diminished, —as might have been expected from their increasing intimacy with his aims and methods. As time went on, most of the higher posts became occupied by his nominees. By his practice he widened the field of choice to include the Foreign Office and Consular service,—in three or four instances taking men from altogether outside the profession. His appointments were varyingly successful ; — he had little gift for intuitive judgement of character. But, once he had had the opportunity of watching men at work, he formed very definite opinions as to their qualifications and did not rest until he had shifted those unsuitably placed. He would not tolerate disloyalty, his standards in that matter as towards the public service being curiously sterner than they were in the domain of party politics. But where this was not charged he took infinite trouble to avoid inflicting pain in the

[1] Basil Cave, Esq., C.B. He was promoted afterwards to be Agent and Consul-General in Zanzibar and is now Consul-General in Algiers.

changes that he made. The long letters in which, eliminating any implication of criticism, he would impress upon the square peg the advantage and importance—not easy perhaps at first sight to recognise—of the square hole to which he was to be transferred, were among the most carefully-thought-out and elaborate of his diplomatic compositions.

The immediate problem as it presented itself to him in those first days of April is briefly summarised in the course of a letter announcing his appointment to the Foreign Office to Lord Odo Russell in Berlin.

To Lord Odo Russell, April 3, 1878.

"We object to Russia under the mask either of Slav or Turk dominating on the various coasts, Persian, Arabian, Syrian, Greek, where we have now friends, clients and interests. How that domination is to be met—whether by diminution or by counterpoise—is another question."

The course actually adopted was in effect a combination of the two methods indicated. To secure—with Austria's diplomatic assistance if it could be obtained—such a diminution of Russia's predominance in European Turkey as would ensure a modicum of independence to the Constantinople Government;—to purchase her peaceable consent to this restriction by abandoning uncompromising opposition to her conquests in Asia;—and, in that connection, to introduce the element of counterpoise by obtaining for England a concession of competing authority from the Sultan;—such were the lines along which Lord Salisbury worked during the following three months. The last-mentioned item in this policy seems to have developed continuously in his purpose from the purely strategic precaution which the Cabinet had in

view at the time he took charge, to the project of establishing England as the controlling influence in Asiatic Turkey which inspired him during the later summer and autumn of this year.

He was, on general grounds, in no hurry to resume the direct negotiations for a Congress which the Anglo-Russian dispute had interrupted.

To Lord Odo Russell, April 17, 1878.

"Our view as to the Congress is that, though it is an admirable instrument to enable friendly Powers to come to an agreement about details, it only aggravates the divergence between those who radically differ, because it accentuates and calls public attention to the amount of difference and makes retreat on either side a loss of honour. We are not, therefore, very anxious for a meeting until we have ascertained that Russia on essential points is amenable. We may of course be forced to a premature meeting by the pressure of others, and of our own public opinion here; but we shall accede with great reluctance—fearing that we may be throwing a chance of peace away."

In one of the summarised reports of Foreign Office interviews which Lord Salisbury transmitted regularly to the Queen, he records a similar argument urged directly upon two or three of the representatives of the great Powers.

To the Queen, April 20, 1878.

"Lord Salisbury has maintained to those Ambassadors the position that, unless Russia is prepared to lay the whole Treaty before the Congress, it is now preferable for the time to consider the main points at issue in private negotiation, instead of trying to devise any other formula on which the

Congress could meet. Peace will be far more likely to result from such a course than from that of putting six negotiators into a room where their discussions would be almost public and where the unreconciled differences which they would bring to the Congress could hardly fail to be aggravated by a formal discussion. When some prospect of an agreement is attained, the formula under which a Congress can meet will not be hard to find."

That an international Conference will do more harm than good if it is entered upon while vital issues remain open, was an axiom of diplomatic tactics upon which he often expatiated. In addition to the more immediate reason urged in these quotations, he used to dwell upon the atmosphere of intrigue which pervades such assemblages. The less interested Powers all have their own ends to serve and their support is inevitably competed for by the protagonists. Complex bargainings, unavowed compacts, side issues and indirect motives of all kinds are intruded upon the larger controversy and, should that be of a critical character, the risk of rupture is greatly increased.

Acting upon these views he lost no time in pressing forward the preliminary negotiations which he believed to be necessary. His earliest preoccupation was to drop a plummet into the as yet unsounded depths of Prince Bismarck's intentions. The British representative at Berlin, Lord Odo Russell,—though he did not occupy the unique position of Lord Lyons, who was practically invited into counsel on the equal footing of a colleague by successive Secretaries of State,—was a man whose gifts peculiarly fitted him for the more receptive and conciliatory tasks of diplomacy. His responsive sense of humour and a certain quietly genial irony of outlook made him the

most personally sympathetic of his chief's diplomatic correspondents at this time. An opportunity presented itself in connection with the continued perilous juxtaposition of the British fleet and Russian army before Constantinople. It was privately suggested to Prince Bismarck that he might offer to mediate a simultaneous withdrawal. The suggestion was accepted and a friendly message returned. Lord Salisbury responded with appropriate wishes for a cordial understanding between Germany and England.

To Lord Odo Russell, April 10, 1878.

"There are no countries who have so few rivalries and so many objects in common, and therefore there are none between whom understanding ought to be so good. We are indeed the only nation north of the Alps which has been able to look with unmixed satisfaction at the position to which the German Empire has attained. I was therefore very heartily glad to receive Prince Bismarck's friendly communication in your telegram of yesterday,—though I am, of course, well aware that many circumstances will make it impossible for him to take a line otherwise than friendly to Russia."

The ice having been broken, the Ambassador was supplied with material for an exchange of confidences which he was invited to use as his discretion directed. "As he likes frank diplomacy, it may be useful for you to be able to tell him exactly what we want." Certain objects of British policy were briefly summarised: that an independent Bulgaria should not reach south of the Balkans; that either Russia should surrender her Asiatic conquests or England should acquire "some post which would safeguard her Asiatic interests"; that the Straits should either be neutralised and their fortification forbidden or that the

blockade of them should be recognised as legitimate in time of war.

To Lord Odo Russell, April 10, 1878.

"The point upon which, as I understand from your letter, Prince Bismarck is most likely to differ from us is the creation of a Greek province of Turkey out of what is now proposed to be the southern half of the new Bulgaria. I can imagine that much difficulty would have been removed if the Ottoman Empire had gone to pieces in the course of this war and the task of building a new structure on cleared land had been the one which the European Powers had had to perform. But this has not been the course of events. The Turkish Empire still subsists, and subsisting can as a vassal convey to its master the power of injuring those whose interests touch it even at its farthest extremities. It is therefore necessary to make it, at all events, tolerably independent within its reduced proportions, and therefore to push the Slav power behind the Balkans. If the Greek kingdom were stronger it might be possible to give Western Thrace to it, but it is too young for such a charge. Another period of transition must be passed through, at the end of which the Greek heritage will no doubt fall to the true heir. But intermediately, the Greek province, with whatever administrative independence you please, must be politically under some flag or other. The Turkish is the only proprietorship which must in its nature be provisional. I should be inclined to assign it to Turkey on the ground on which a patron whose son is not of age presents an old and infirm clergyman to the family living."

The answering report of Prince Bismarck's views presented him as being willing to support any terms of settlement which England might think necessary for her own security,—provided that they were

acceptable to Russia. He would do nothing to imperil friendly relations with his eastern neighbour, and his own opinion was avowedly in favour of a policy of partition. Otherwise he professed anxiety for a peaceful solution, though Lord Salisbury evidently thought that in this direction his wishes required strengthening.

To Lord Odo Russell, April 17, 1878.

" He holds an exceptional position in this matter; not so much on account of his military strength, which is not likely to come into play in this question, as because he is credited with always knowing his own mind and sometimes saying it,—two merits which cannot be predicated of the other two members of the Kaiserbund. I still think that the division of Bulgaria in Europe and the provision of compensation for England in Asia are the two keys of this difficult lock. The putting the indemnity into a precise form, and the arrangement of the Straits question in a manner that shall not put England into a worse position than she was before the war (*sic*). Of course, we should be very glad if the Straits could be declared as open as the Sound; but, even short of that, some accommodation may be possible.

" Supposing we cannot get these things and have to fight,—my impression is that the war will be more expensive than bloody. But, as Russia possesses the men and we possess the money, that is not a characteristic calculated to make us specially uneasy. I think it will have indirect effects of an important kind. It must produce a great ferment—a great convulsion of feeling among all the nations of south-east Europe, and that earthquake will upset the worst-compacted States,—Turkey first and Austria second. Prince Bismarck is anxious for the first result and is prepared apparently to risk much for its attainment. Personally I do not greatly differ. But he cannot desire the second, and, as I ventured to press on him when I

saw him, he is putting it in jeopardy. A far better issue will be that a Greek Governor, appointed for a term of years by the Porte, with the consent of the Powers, should rule over the valley of the Maritza and the Vardar, and that Russia should occupy herself for the next generation in civilising the Bulgarians north of the Balkans, and,—so far as she can,—assimilating the Roumanians. Her digestion will have plenty to do with that operation for some time to come."

Efforts to arrive at an understanding with Austria were beset with difficulties which repetition had made familiar. Lord Salisbury's correspondent at Vienna, recently appointed to the Embassy there, was Sir Henry Elliot, his late colleague at Constantinople.

To Sir Henry Elliot, April 10, 1878.

"The length of time which has elapsed before the leaving of a messenger has not allowed me before this to announce myself to you in our new relations. When we were last in official relations you were in a post to which you can hardly look back with regret. You are at all events now at a Court which has some—though an uncertain—promise of stability. Were you not at Naples before you went to Constantinople? *Absit omen!* May it not be your fate to witness closely a third death agony.

"I cannot help feeling that this end to Austria's vacillation is not absolutely chimerical. She has shown in the last year such extreme weakness and want of trust in her own power—and so much of the insincerity which belongs to weakness—that I cannot help fearing that any great events in south-eastern Europe may dissolve permanently the ill-compacted structure. Meanwhile you have the difficult task to perform of inducing this insincere, unready Government to pledge itself to some definite line of action. You may count on our hearty support in a very

difficult position. You should, I think, take every opportunity which you decently can to press on Count Andrassy to declare his policy—not in concealed and ambiguous communications but by some act that shall pledge him to the world. If he is about to take a Russian policy and allow the Slav Power to set itself up where it pleases, so that it does not come due south of him, he will at least enjoy the full support of Russia. If he resists the extreme Slav extension he will enjoy the co-operation of Greece, Turkey and England, and the goodwill of the rest of Europe. But if he will commit himself to nobody, he runs the risk of being tricked equally by all—or at least distrusted by all, including those who will not stoop to trick him. Your language of course will necessarily be very much less energetic, but I think your advice in modified and diplomatic phrase should take this direction. We have heard nothing from him for a long time ; I suppose Ignatieff gets all his communications."

Count Andrassy was invited to support England in her Bulgarian demands,—which accorded absolutely with his own proclaimed policy. The invitation was repeated. He was asked to suggest a frontier line of his own as a basis for combined action. No definite answer could be obtained. He was eloquent on other topics,—on the urgency of shortening the period of Russian occupation,—on the territory to be awarded to Montenegro. But to the appeal for full co-operation he would reply only with evasions or misrepresentations of the proposals made to him. Lord Salisbury in making this report to the Queen expressed his growing dissatisfaction with the position,—" not because there is any definite resolution to bring war on Europe, but because there seems no decision or clearness of perception sufficient to avoid it." (*April 24.*) The same day he wrote to Vienna :

To Sir Henry Elliot, April 24, 1878.

"Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than the line which Andrassy is pursuing. If it were mere duplicity I should not mind so much. But it obviously covers intense irresolution. For if he had made up his mind to go halves with Russia in the Balkan Peninsula, I don't suppose that he would have any ground to fear Bismarck, and the harm that we could do him would be small. But he has no single definite object. He is trusting to indefatigable shiftiness to enable him to keep well at once with Hungarians, Russians, English, Turks and Italians, while he steadily obeys the orders from Berlin.

"Our policy is to press him constantly for a definite understanding. At all events his movements will throw some light on the counsels of others; and he may stumble into a resolution by accident, or be pushed into it by the conflicting domestic forces which surround him."

On one long-suspended issue Count Andrassy had at length come to a decision, and in this same week he announced that, since increased disorder in Bosnia and Herzegovina must inevitably follow upon the erection of the new autonomy between those provinces and the capital, and since Austria could not tolerate a permanent anarchy upon her borders, he had decided—reluctantly—to invite Turkey to cede them to her. Lord Salisbury received this recantation of earlier protestations with equanimity. Nowhere had the fruits of Turkish misgovernment been more calamitous than in those districts, and their eventual transference to Austrian control had long been discounted. He was only doubtful as to whether a full revelation of the Minister's mind in this matter had yet been made.

To Lord Lyons, April 24, 1878.

"Andrassy undoubtedly means to have Bosnia, but whether he will be satisfied with that I am not so certain. It is a possible policy for him to throw the Danube over altogether; to secure an outlet for his produce by a rail to Salonika; and to accept a simultaneous extension southward in parallel lines of Austrian and Russian possession, whether in the form of actual territory or vassal states. In that case he will throw us over; and his course will be easy enough if he can square the Hungarians."

To Lord Odo Russell, April 26, 1878.

"Austria is still shifty, as you will see by the confidential papers forwarded to you. I suppose the annexation of Bosnia must be looked upon as a profound secret—until you see it announced in the Vienna correspondence of the *Times*. I am glad that Austria has resolved upon this step, for in itself it cannot hurt us, and it will bring to light what is the real power of the Hungarian element in the monarchy."

Negotiation was further complicated by the personality of the Austrian ambassador in London. Count Beüst, by an unusual sequence of offices, had preceded his present chief as first Minister in Vienna, and his preoccupation with his own views of what ought to be done made him distrusted as a go-between. On this occasion he had been left in ignorance of the Chancellor's new departure until some days after Lord Salisbury had received direct information of it from Vienna and Constantinople.

To Sir Henry Elliot, April 27, 1878.

"Beüst called on me yesterday by appointment, but I could not find out he had anything to say. I half suspect that he came for the purpose of obtaining

from me some expression of opposition to the Bosnian scheme which should induce Andrassy to pause, for he had, previous to the announcement, some days back, entertained me at considerable length with the insuperable objections which existed to the annexation,—his own rejection of the idea when he was in office,—the present firm resolve of both the German and Hungarian sections that it should not take place, and so on. I cannot think that he is pleased with Andrassy having made him cut such a foolish figure, and would be glad if he could baffle the scheme. I did not however gratify him in that respect, for it would have been pulling other people's chestnuts out of the fire with no profit to ourselves. If the Hungarians, etc., do want to keep their Count in order, they must do it for themselves. I therefore replied by disclaiming any trace of jealousy of any aggrandisement Austria might obtain, and disavowing any intention of interfering in the matter. He complained that Layard was resisting the scheme at Constantinople, but I disabused his mind on that point and assured him that Layard was leaving the Turks to take what course they might think best.

"As to the question of the length of the Russian occupation, I have telegraphed to you generally that we are willing to support Count Andrassy's views. But though we are quite prepared to urge a diminution in this occupation, we cannot consider it a question of first-class importance or put it on the same footing as the question of the limits of Bulgaria. The future influence of Russia in Bulgaria does not turn on the difference between six months' and two years' occupation. The fact of Russia having liberated them, the ease with which she can reach them, the religious intercommunion, the fact that all that is educated in Bulgaria has hitherto sought and will still more seek its training in Russia, the Russian officials, the hope of Constantinople in the future dangled before their eyes as a reward for good behaviour,—these are the things which will make the new Slav state the very

humble servant of Russia. The stay of the soldiers —seeing what Russian soldiers are—is likely to have, if anything, an opposite effect. . . .

"Count Andrassy's insistence on it suggests the suspicion that this is the point on which it is agreed between him and Russia that the latter shall yield, and then sing a loud paean over his victory to the Hungarian Parliament. For this purpose it will be essential to him that its importance shall be admitted and he would be glad of our warranty to that effect."

The forecast as to Bulgaria's future relations with Russia was demonstrated unanswerably. In view of subsequent events, one is reminded of the comment which in another letter closes some similar piece of cogent argument—"But logic is of no use in diplomacy." [1]

In May, in a despatch covering the whole field of negotiation, he made another abortive attempt to bring the elusive Austrian to the point. He summarised his offer in a letter to Sir Henry: "The upshot of it is simply this; that we will tolerate his proceedings in Bosnia and Montenegro, and will back up his desire to shorten the period of Russian occupation in Bulgaria and Roumania, if he will agree with us upon a Bulgarian line." (*May 4.*)

But the writer was already seeking a settlement along a shorter road than that which led through Vienna. Prince Gortchakoff's reply to his Circular had been defiant in tone, strengthening among the public the expectation of war. While not rejecting the possibility of concessions in Europe, it forbade any hope of them in Asia and was probably intended as a bid for Austrian support at England's expense. But this attitude was precisely the one which Lord

[1] To Lord Lyons, May 22, 1878.

Salisbury's plans had been prepared to meet and, without waiting longer upon Austrian indecision, he resolved to seek at once a direct understanding with Russia. Fortune favoured him. Shortly after despatching his answering challenge to the British Circular, Prince Gortchakoff fell ill. His small ingenuities in diplomacy and his personal vanity would have made him at all times difficult to negotiate with on any frank basis of mutual concession, and these characteristics were now aggravated by the intoxication of military success and by an old man's weakened self-control. In the administrative anarchy normally prevailing in St. Petersburg his temporary withdrawal left Russian diplomacy practically without central direction. The negotiations which followed, therefore, were conducted exclusively in London, and it does not appear that throughout their course Count Schouvaloff received any specific instructions from official superiors or made any intermediate reference to them. He was an able, clear-sighted man, intimate through a long diplomatic experience with the requirements and aims of other nations, and capable of facing the conclusions which they involved. He knew peace to be essential for Russia, was probably conscious that his Emperor agreed with him, and set himself without demur to work for it independently. His methods were not always scrupulous, but the rare merit can be claimed for him of having been willing to risk—as in the event he actually sacrificed—his own career to save his country from a disastrous mistake. Patriotic Russians never forgave him for the immediate mortification which his success inflicted upon their national pride.

On April 20 he gave the first opening for approach. Lord Salisbury had, as a first expedient, suggested to Count Münster, the German ambassador, that

Prince Bismarck might extend his mediating activities to the main issue and ascertain unofficially and confidentially how far it was possible for Russia and England to agree upon essential points.

To Lord Odo Russell, April 20, 1878.

"Schouvaloff came to me to-day. He has not been much with me, which he explains by a desire not to present embarrassing messages from his Court. I don't think he quite likes the negotiation passing into Münster's hands, or perhaps he has received a hint of some change of disposition at Berlin. His principal object, he said, was to express a hope that, if Bismarck declined to take any part or any further part in the large negotiations, we might not consider them broken off on that account. He said Bismarck was a nervous capricious man 'who had an ultimatum always in his mouth,' and that if everything did not go perfectly smooth, he was capable of throwing up the thing in disgust. He did not, however, dissent from the consideration which I pressed upon him, that to enter a Congress with the probability of retiring from it was to aggravate enormously the chances of war, and that the best chance of agreeing was a mutual knowledge of the points on which each side was inclined to insist or to give way."

The incoherence of Russian diplomacy was in fact proving intolerably exasperating to the German Chancellor's temper. Count Münster reported difficulties in the withdrawal negotiations.

To Lord Beaconsfield, April 25, 1878.

"Bismarck finds the proposals made by the Russians so unreasonable that he has told them he will be the intermediary in this negotiation no longer; but that they must negotiate directly through Schouvaloff. I have told Münster that we should

regret any such change very much, as it would seriously diminish the chances of coming to an understanding. . . .

"He then spoke of the main negotiation. He said Bismarck entirely concurred in my view that a Congress would be of little value unless an understanding had previously been come to on the chief points at issue, and that Bismarck was not unwilling to be the intermediary of such an interchange of ideas if he was asked by the Russians, but did not like to force himself upon them.

"I give you just what passed, without attempting to put a value to it."

No intermediary, in fact, proved necessary,—but it does not appear that any invitation was given. Lord Salisbury was coming to the conclusion that the continuance of Russo-German friendship rested mainly upon the old Emperor's family attachments. In response to an appeal from the Home Secretary for guidance in a speech that he was about to deliver in the provinces, he sent a short sketch of the situation as it appeared from inside.

To the Rt. Hon. R. A. Cross, April 30, 1878.

"Andrassy has been brought no nearer to any candid offer to us. I doubt whether he is fully at one with the Russians yet; but he does not mean to quarrel with them. . . . The real pivot is the Emperor William. I believe that Germany and the Crown Prince and Princess are anti-Russian, and that Bismarck himself inclines that way; but on this point his master is intractable. Therefore Bismarck, instead of pressing on Russia, has to force Austria to come to terms with Russia. Russia herself is in great straits, and every cool head is looking forward to war with us with the gravest apprehension. For myself, I do not think there will be war, but this

result can only be obtained by maintaining an attitude in word and deed which, first, shall show no flinching in our resolution ; secondly, shall show no inclination to inflict any gratuitous humiliation upon Russia. Both precautions are necessary—because if, on the one hand, they are likely to be impressed in their cooler moments by our resolute attitude, they are, on the other hand, very youthful in their temperament and might fling themselves into any mad adventure rather than submit to any fixed design of humiliating them.

" Schouvaloff yesterday began in a very cautious and circumspect manner negotiations on the main question. Some days must probably pass before we come to close quarters. Both Berlin and St. Petersburg are quite agreed that the Congress should be deferred until an agreement on main points is at least in sight."

This interview is recorded also in a report to the Queen. It had begun with a discussion on the withdrawal question.

To the Queen, April 29, 1878.

" Count Schouvaloff proceeded to dwell upon the main negotiations and to express the opinion that the best way of carrying them to a successful issue was that we should state to him what were the points on which we insisted most, and that he should go back to St. Petersburg to counteract, as he hinted, sinister influences there. He also informed Lord Salisbury that he had heard from a General Gray, who is much in the Emperor's confidence, that the only points on which Russia would fight were Bessarabia—Kars—Batoum—and Antivari for Montenegro."

The negotiation proceeded swiftly and to an effective conclusion. It was a notable experiment in diplomatic candour. The concessions desired by

England were discussed, and a statement was drawn up distinguishing between those for which she was prepared to fight and those which she would be willing to treat as subjects for bargaining. If a corresponding classification of Russian requirements could be accommodated to this analysis, peace would be ensured. Armed with this statement Count Schouvaloff started, on May 8, on a flying mission to St. Petersburg to place the matter himself before the Emperor and return with his answer. He stopped on the way to take the German Chancellor into confidence. "I have requested him," writes Lord Salisbury to Lord Odo Russell, "to tell all that we have spoken of together to Prince Bismarck." (*May 4.*) Count Schouvaloff has left an account of the interview at Lauenburg,—of the Chancellor's protest against the precedence in preliminary understanding which was being given to England over Austria,—of his acquiescence in this as inevitable on hearing of Lord Salisbury's acceptance of the Asiatic annexations,—of his undisguised and displeased astonishment at this complaisance.[1] The displeasure was comprehensible enough. Agreement between England and Russia upon the Asiatic issue dethroned the Central Powers from their position as arbiters in the coming settlement. But it is difficult to believe in the astonishment in view of the confidences made to Berlin, three weeks before, as to the "compensation" which Lord Salisbury intended to secure in Asia.[2] Compensation assumes loss. Count Schouvaloff's memory was not to be trusted. In the autumn of 1879 he made another statement about this same interview to Lord Salisbury, who reported and commented upon it to the Queen.

[1] Hanotaux, *Hist. de la France Contemporaine*, vol. iv. p. 339.

[2] See above, p. 242.

"He said that, when he passed through Berlin in May 1878, . . . Prince Bismarck told him that he was right to settle with England rather than with Austria, because Austria's military power was worthless,—she *could* not fight. Lord Salisbury is pretty confident that Count Schouvaloff told him this story last year, but that he put the same observation into his own mouth, not into Bismarck's." (*November 3, 1879.*)

In January 1880, referring to some similar story from the same source, he writes to Lord Dufferin: "I have observed that some of his choicest legends are devoted to this theme. He has more than once told me of Bismarck saying things to him wholly inconsistent with what B. has said to me."

A pause followed while the decisive issue was being debated in the privacy of the Russian Imperial Cabinet. "Everybody," writes Lord Salisbury to Lord Odo, "seems to be holding their breath during Schouvaloff's 'dernier essai.'" (*May 15.*) Count Andrassy showed signs of growing uneasiness. "He has been visited with a sudden sense of the imprudence and wickedness of separate negotiations, and assures us with a fascinating simplicity that he is not to be caught in that sort of trap." (*May 22.*) It looked perilously as if, after all, Austria and not England might be cast for the rôle of odd-man-out. The menace of such an issue achieved what no direct appeal had been able to effect. A few days before Count Schouvaloff's return the Austrian Chancellor announced his approval of the proposals which for two months had been waiting his acceptance, and expressed his readiness to subscribe a categorical agreement with England in accordance with them. It was Lord Salisbury's turn to hesitate. A decision so long delayed might or might not be genuine. The critical

moment in the Russian negotiation was approaching, and no opportunity must be given to disruptive intrigues. The remarks reported of Count Beüst in the following letter referred to rumours that were rife at the time as to Count Andrassy's approaching fall from power. His policy—or lack of it—was very unpopular with certain sections of his fellow-countrymen.

To Sir Henry Elliot, May 22, 1878.

"It is clearly impossible that we should come to any definite arrangement until we know what Schouvaloff has to say. He returns this evening and I am to see him to-morrow.

"Beüst insisted more earnestly upon the necessity of an arrangement expressed in writing than I have hitherto known him to do. He went so far as to say this: 'There has been mistrust on one side and the other. You mistrust Count Andrassy because he is pulled from one side to the other and exposed to divers influences. Perhaps you are justified in doing so, but if you will once bind him by a written agreement, you will find that he will stand by it. Do not think that he is shaken in his position. I know the Emperor too well to believe it. As long as Andrassy is attacked the Emperor will stand by him; and the firmer the more he is attacked. In 1870' (I am not sure of the date), 'when I was being attacked on all sides,—Hungarians, Germans, Slavs, all on my back, the Emperor suddenly gave me, quite unasked' (some rank or other in) 'the order of Maria-Theresa. When I was popular and receiving expressions of confidence from various important bodies, then—suddenly—Crac!' And thereupon Count Beüst took his leave.

"The conversation was curious as showing more personal initiative than I have as yet seen in him, and an apparently strong conviction that an agreement between us and Austria is a thing to be pressed

for earnestly at this juncture. . . . I am very anxious not to break with Austria or to force her into the arms of Russia. But, in spite of Beüst's assurances, I doubt whether any written agreement will bind Andrassy, and I fear that, the moment one is made, Russia will raise her price and buy him off. His calculation, I fear, has been to use England as a bogey to frighten Russia, and if he could not thus get his end diplomatically, then to push England into a separate war with Russia and extort terms from the latter when she is exhausted. I feel therefore that coming to close quarters with Andrassy is dangerous work, and I had rather avoid it till all hope of amicable settlement with Russia is at an end."

Count Schouvaloff reached England that evening. He brought with him his Emperor's acceptance on its main lines of the arrangement proposed. The conclusion of an agreement was deferred for a few days by discussion on one still unreconciled difference. The Czar would not hear of Turkish troops being retained in any of the emancipated provinces ;— the British Government insisted on the preservation of the Sultan's right to garrison his frontiers to the south of the Balkans. The question had finally to be left over for decision at the Congress,—the only one so treated upon which both sides still asserted their resolve not to yield.

On May 30 a Memorandum was signed recording the understanding which had been come to. Its application was strictly limited,—except in one particular it bound the contracting parties only as to their action in the Congress itself. The Russian Emperor undertook not to offer final opposition there to a division of the proposed Bulgaria into two provinces, of which the northern alone should receive unrestricted autonomy,—nor to a withdrawal of its frontiers altogether from the coasts of the Egean.

England's claim to an equal right of consultation upon the reforms to be introduced in other parts of the Turkish Empire was placed in the same category. Her Government in return promised a similarly limited resistance to certain clauses of the San Stefano Treaty. The Asiatic annexations were the most important item in this engagement, but acquiescence in them was doubly conditioned. Russia solemnly repudiated any intention of extending them further in the future, and she was warned that should she, after full discussion in Congress, persist now in their retention, England would regard herself as being thereby placed under a special obligation to safeguard the Ottoman Empire in those regions. It was noted with unexplained significance that Her Majesty's Government believed that this obligation could be fulfilled without bringing upon Europe the calamity of another war.

Upon all these issues, as well as upon a long list of subsidiary points upon which no rupture was feared, both parties reserved to themselves full liberty to secure, if they could, more favourable terms by process of diplomatic bargaining in Congress. Such process would only be affected by this agreement in so far as that neither side would be able to extort by threats concessions for which they had here frankly admitted that they were not prepared to fight. This self-imposed limitation was felt in some quarters to be specially open to criticism on the British side. Russia, at that moment, had far more cause to dread war than England, and it was arguable that further advantage might have been achieved by working upon her fears. Apart from the evident risk involved in such diplomacy, Lord Salisbury had an ingrained distrust of all courses not based upon the actuality of facts. His habitual disdain of optimist

assumptions or political ventures of faith as grounds for action found its counterpart in his dislike to any menacing self-assertion which did not represent an effective purpose. It would be rash to affirm that he never succumbed to the temptation of "bluffing" in the course of his career,—but the instances of his having done so are rare and very fugitive.

On its first publication the substance of this agreement was strongly condemned by the Jingoes of his party,—a section of opinion whose antagonism he had already experienced, as it was destined to confront him to the end. They loudly re-echoed Prince Bismarck's astonishment at the terms which had been conceded in Asia. Habitual condemners of compromise were on this occasion reinforced by anxious Anglo-Indians and faithful Turcophils. The abandonment to Russia of Kars with its great traditions of defence and admitted strategic importance was bitterly deplored, but indignation was specially concentrated upon the proposed surrender of Batoum. Apart from its potential value as a naval and commercial base, its surrounding population was mainly Mahommedan and it was still in the actual occupation of the Sultan's troops. In sending a copy of the agreement to Sir Henry Elliot, Lord Salisbury evidently felt that to such a devoted adherent of the Turks some explanation of his action was necessary.

To Sir Henry Elliot, June 3, 1878.

"The enclosed memoranda, signed by Schouvaloff and me, require some explanation. In all these negotiations our path has very much been marked out for us by Austria. If she would have agreed to fuller co-operation at an earlier period, no special arrangement with Russia would have been necessary. But we have been obliged to provide for the case—

which is even now possible and three weeks ago seemed very probable—of Austria throwing us over altogether.

"The first point in our communications with Austria which seemed quite evident was that we should get no help from her as to Turkey in Asia. This was not unnatural on her part, but it forced us to face the question whether we were prepared to go to war for Kars and Batoum alone. This expedient on the whole did not commend itself, for it was quite evident that when we had taken them, unless we were prepared to defend them, we should have done nothing; and if for the sake of the rest of the Turkish Empire we *were* prepared to defend their north-east frontier, was there anything in these particular positions which made them worth a bloody war with a doubtful issue in the first instance? If we had had anybody to help us, the matter might have been different. But standing alone we have thought it better to take measures (not yet quite complete) for the protection of Turkey in Asia, and not to go to war about the Armenian conquests.

"The Trebizond road is conceded. With respect to Europe we have further acquired the certainty that Austria did not mean to fight for Bessarabia. This was a matter of secondary interest to us. In any case we should not have taken a leading part either in proposing resistance or in carrying it out. But the fact is sufficiently apparent that no one else would have helped us. The Montenegrin and Servian question does not interest us in the least. We will support Austria in argument in Congress, but Parliament would not vote a shilling for a war in such a cause.

"It then became a question whether, having clearly made up our minds on the point, we ought to let Russia know that we were not inclined to fight for those particular portions of the Treaty of San Stefano, or rather against what concession on Russia's part it would be worth our while to give this undertaking."

The Memorandum was never intended for publication. Except for Russia's repudiation of future conquest, its engagements were all of a temporary character, and it could be classified with the many fugitive understandings of a similar nature which mark the progress of every negotiation. But within twenty-four hours of its signature a summary of its contents appeared in the London *Globe* newspaper. It was in the main correct, but it included among British concessions the total exclusion of Turkish troops from Southern Bulgaria which Russia had been so anxious to secure and England so resolute to refuse. Questions were asked in Parliament, and Lord Salisbury described the publication as "wholly unauthentic and not deserving of the confidence of your Lordships' House."[1] A fortnight later, just after the Congress had assembled, the full text of the document was reproduced in the same newspaper. No further denial was possible, and Lord Salisbury was severely criticised for having endeavoured in the first instance to mislead the public. He was challenged on the subject in the House of Lords after his return from Berlin, but refused to excuse himself.[2] The point misstated had been one of such importance that his Government had been prepared to risk the failure of the Congress rather than yield it. A version, surreptitiously obtained, which contained such a substantial inaccuracy had been rightly described as unauthentic and unworthy of confidence. He did not attempt to refute the charge of having intended, in fact, to throw doubt upon the rest of the publication nor the accusation of disingenuousness which it involved. His silence on the point sufficiently indicated his view that when a Minister's confidence is being forced no one has a right to read more

[1] Hansard, June 3, 1878.

[2] Hansard, July 26, 1878.

than verbal accuracy into his reply. Candour under such conditions would involve active complicity in a breach of trust *ex hypothesi* in his opinion injurious to the interests which he is bound in honour to defend. Where the claims of truth coincided with those of honour,—as in the case of statements of purpose or policy upon the faith of which support was being engaged at home or abroad—he was sensitive to their appeal,—to a degree indeed which more than once caused wirepullers and party journalists to groan over his indiscretions. But in that perennially disputed dilemma of casuistry where the two are opposed he undoubtedly held that honour should have the preference. On hearing that some one of his acquaintance had announced that under no circumstances whatever should he think it right to say what was not true, his dry comment was, "I am glad that I have been warned;—I shall be careful never to trust him with a secret."

As soon as the Russian agreement was safe, that with Austria was arranged without further difficulty. Before either of them was actually signed, the Convention with Turkey which was to complete the circle of Lord Salisbury's scheme of settlement had been concluded. Little time was spent upon its actual negotiation, but it had been prepared for in his private correspondence from the time that he first took charge of the Foreign Office. Throughout April and May his letters to Mr. Layard were almost entirely devoted to arguing the advantage which Turkey would derive from British protection even upon the somewhat drastic terms upon which he proposed to offer it. Nothing was to be said on the subject at present to the Sultan or his Ministers;—the argumentative effort seems, in the first instance,

to have been expended wholly for the ambassador's own benefit. Mr. Layard, in his youth, serving under Lord Stratford at Constantinople, had imbibed the full Crimean tradition. He had subsequently spent several years in travel and archaeological exploration in Asiatic Turkey and had found the Turks, as others have done who have lived amongst them, a more attractive people than the races subject to them. This appreciation added to his influence at the Porte and on that account was looked upon by his chief as an asset in his favour. But in the present instance, to secure his full sympathy for the policy which he was to carry out, it was necessary to place in the forefront the benefit which it would bring to the Turkish Empire. It was therefore, as will be seen, almost wholly from that point of view that these letters were written. They are among the longest and most carefully-thought-out of the series, but they are largely repetitive and one or two extracts will suffice.

To Mr. Layard, April 4, 1878.

"I have naturally had the opportunity of watching closely as a member of the Cabinet your diplomatic proceedings during this protracted crisis. I have not invariably concurred in all the views you have expressed, but you must allow me to say how much I have admired the skill and the unsparing energy with which your very arduous functions have been performed. Their difficulty will not diminish as time goes on. You have hitherto laboured to prevent Russian preponderance by sustaining the Turkish breakwater. But the breakwater is now shattered, I fear, beyond repair, and the flood is pouring over it. Another dyke may have to be established behind it, which possibly must be constructed from the material of the first. To us the idea of additional territory is repellent, and if we are forced at any

time to strengthen ourselves, our wish will be to reduce any acquisition to the smallest dimensions. But, anyway, I am afraid the plans of counterpoise of which the air is full,—even the most modest of them,—cannot but be at the expense of the Porte, and it will be a hard task to give them the reality, still harder to give them the appearance, of a friendly intention. Yet the stronger we are in these seas, the stronger will the Porte be to resist further invasion. What would not the Porte have given that Roumania had been ceded to Austria twenty years ago—or that we had remained in possession of Varna or Batoum at the same epoch ? But I am digressing. I only intended to direct the current of your thoughts into a channel into which one day—not yet—they may have to run.

" Of course, not one word of this is for anybody else."

A fortnight later he urges more directly the advantages which the Sultan would gain from the surrender to England of some military post. It would, among other things, give permanence to her defence of his Asiatic dominions — making it her interest as well as putting it within her power. In this letter the Egean coast and the Persian Gulf are mentioned as possible localities,—fugitive suggestions, thrown out probably in Cabinet discussion, of which no more was heard. On May 2 a new and notable development of the proposal was announced. The cession by Turkey of a place of arms, which was all that had hitherto been suggested, was now to form part only of a much wider scheme. In granting it, the Sultan was to be asked to accept the protection of England, who in return would guarantee the future integrity of his Asiatic dominions. This letter must be read in conjunction with the negotiations with Count Schouvaloff which were now in progress. The fulfilment of that " special obligation " for the defence

of Asia Minor, obscurely hinted at in the Anglo-Russian agreement, was being provided for. The plan had apparently only just been completed in its author's purpose ;—he presents it to the ambassador as one still personal to himself and upon which the Cabinet had not yet been consulted.

To Mr. Layard, May 2, 1878.

"The more I think of the future destiny of the Porte, the more I am convinced that any return to the position of the Treaty of 1856, with its diminished boundaries and weakened force, could only lead to the dissolution of the whole Ottoman Empire, followed by endless anarchy. The time is passed for talking about 'independence and integrity.' It was something of a sham in 1856,—as events have proved. But it would be a pure mockery now. The Porte must recognise that it needs protection ; that that protection must be given by some Power that has an interest in avoiding the anarchy which would follow on its fall ; and must be facilitated by a willingness on the part of the Porte itself to make the necessary arrangements."

He foreshadows the steps by which, unless such protection be accepted, catastrophe will be approached :

"The mere presence of the Russians at Kars will cause Persia, Mesopotamia, and Syria to turn their faces northward. Then a Russian party will arise,—and consequent disorder—and the languid administrative powers of the Porte will be overtaxed, and a chaos will follow of which, in some form or other, the Russians will take advantage to reduce the Porte to impotence, and to turn its provinces into Russian satrapies. The presence of England is the only remedy which can prevent this process of destruction from going forward. I think that we

might very properly enter into a defensive alliance with the Porte, undertaking to join in defending her Asiatic Empire from any attacks of Russia. I cannot, however, say this definitely, for, though I find it is agreed to by such of my colleagues as I have seen, I cannot be certain that the Cabinet will sanction it. Personally, I think that such an arrangement would prevent any further encroachment of Russia, and would also check that turning Russia-wards on the part of the inhabitants of Western Asia, which I dread. But, to give any strength or value to such an undertaking, some port in the Levant would be an absolute necessity. It would be ridiculous to attempt to exercise any such protective office from such a distance as Malta."

To Mr. Layard, May 9, 1878.

"The great problem which the Turk will have to solve, as soon as he has got rid of the Russian army off his soil, is—how to keep his Asiatic Empire together. Sooner or later the greater part of his European Empire must go. Bosnia and Bulgaria are as good as gone. We may with great efforts give him another lease of Thrace, and he may keep for a considerable time a hold upon Macedonia and Albania, and possibly upon Thessaly and Epirus. But he will not get soldiers from there. . . . If he has his own strength alone to trust to, no one will believe in his power of resistance. He has been beaten too often. The Arabs and the Asiatics generally will look to the Russian as the coming man. The Turk's only chance is to obtain the alliance of a great Power—and the only available Power is England.

"Is it possible for England to give that alliance? I cannot speak yet with confidence, but I think so. For England the question of Turkey in Asia is very different from the question of Turkey in Europe. The only change possible for the Asiatic Christians would be to come directly under the Government of Russia. There can be no question of autonomy—

of young and struggling nationalities and the rest of it. Now the direct government of Russia is pleasant for nobody; but to Christians of a different rite it is the most oppressive conceivable. Even, therefore, for the sake of the Christians England would not be restrained by any consideration of humanity from engaging to resist the further advance of the Russians. And the vast majority of the populations of Asiatic Turkey are Mahommedans to whom the Turkish Government is congenial, and as good as any other Mahommedans get except our own. And, while Russian influence over the provinces of European Turkey would be a comparatively distant and indirect evil, her influence over Syria and Mesopotamia would be a very serious embarrassment and would certainly, through the connection of Baghdad with Bombay, make our hold on India more difficult. I do not therefore despair of England coming to the conclusion that she can undertake such a defensive alliance. But for that purpose it is, as I said before, absolutely and indispensably necessary that she should be nearer at hand than Malta."

The Cabinet was consulted and approved, and on May 16 a long letter to the ambassador, which for the first time offers internal evidence of having been submitted to corporate criticism, conveyed the full terms of the Convention which, on the receipt of enacting telegraphic instructions, was to be offered to the Sultan. The arguments by which it might be urged upon his acceptance were repeated at full length. It was only to come into effect in the event of Russia's retention of Kars and Batoum and their surrounding territory. The disastrous effect with which those conquests must react upon the position of Turkey in Asia was again dwelt upon. "To us the prospect is serious, because the next shock must break the Turkish Empire up, and we shall have to choose between allowing Russia to dominate over

Syria and Mesopotamia and taking those countries for ourselves,—and either alternative is formidable. To Turkey, however, it is a question of existence." A pledge of future defence was offered—upon conditions.

To Mr. Layard, May 16, 1878.

"Two conditions, however, are indispensable. If our defensive alliance is to be worth anything, we must not be hampered by divisions at home, and we must have every facility for exercising vigilance and giving assistance in Asia.

"To meet the first object it will be necessary that the Porte should give us specific assurances of good government to Asiatic Christians, similar to those given in the Treaty to Russia; and should thereby invest us with a special privilege of advice and remonstrance in case of any gross abuse.

"To meet the other, the Porte should concede to us the occupation of Cyprus. It has the double advantage of vicinity both to Asia Minor and Syria; it would enable us without any act of overt hostility and without disturbing the peace of Europe, to accumulate material of war and, if requisite, the troops necessary for operations in Asia Minor or Syria, while it would not excite the jealousy which other Powers would feel at any acquisitions on the mainland.

"We should not desire to acquire it in any way which could indicate hostility to the Porte, or any acquiescence in partition. We should therefore propose to hold it as part of the agreement by which we undertook to defend the Asiatic Empire against the Russians; and we should distinctly stipulate that, as both these engagements were consequent on the Russian annexations in Armenia, as soon as these should cease, both our defensive alliance and our occupation of Cyprus should cease also."

Cyprus as the object of occupation had only been definitely decided upon in Cabinet within the

last fortnight. Various references show that a number of places had been discussed since the subject had first been mooted,—Lemnos and Mitylene, Cyprus and Crete, Alexandretta and a "port on the Persian Gulf." The only two which seem to have been under serious consideration for any length of time, however, were Alexandretta and Cyprus. The arguments used in the earlier letters quoted point undoubtedly to a post on the mainland. But the island was finally chosen—mainly, apparently, out of deference to French susceptibilities. The danger of alarming these had throughout been very present to Lord Salisbury. Lord Lyons had been early taken into confidence and had expressed anxiety—hardly justified in the event—as to the reception which the Convention would anyhow meet with in Paris. Lord Salisbury had suggested possibilities of balancing compensations in the future. Was there any truth in the rumour that the eyes of French statesmen were turned towards Tunis? "It is, of course, an extension of French territory and influence of which we should not have the slightest jealousy or fear." (*May 11.*) At Berlin, in conversation, he gave the same assurance more directly to M. Waddington. But Lord Lyons' warnings were not ignored. In enclosing him a copy of these final instructions to Mr. Layard his chief adds the comment, "You will see that we have deferred to your views in turning the eyes of desire away from Syria." (*May 16.*)

At the close of the letter of the 16th, Lord Salisbury had warned his ambassador at Constantinople that the instructions conveyed in it were not yet definitive. "So rapid are the changes in the dissolving views of European politics that it is possible,—though not probable,—that they may never become so." A week later Count Schouvaloff's return from St.

Petersburg with the assurance of an agreement based upon Russia's retention of her Asiatic conquests became the signal for concluding the arrangement which was to complement it.

Lord Salisbury had not forgotten the lessons learnt at the Constantinople Conference. On this occasion there should be no opportunity given for Turkish procrastination and no doubts left as to British intentions. The Sultan had not as yet had any intimation of the proposal. On Friday the 24th, Mr. Layard received telegraphic instructions to place it before him and to ask for a decision within forty-eight hours. If he had not accepted it by the Sunday evening, he was to be warned that England would abandon her opposition to Russia's advance and desist from all further efforts to postpone the partition of his Empire. The threat was no doubt seriously intended. Its fulfilment would scarcely have found Lord Salisbury personally reluctant, and he never referred in conversation to any difficulty in convincing his colleagues of its necessity. Much water had flowed beneath bridges since the challenging Crimeanism of fifteen months earlier. The Convention was the keystone of the diplomatic structure which they had sanctioned ;—if it failed, the whole arrangement with Russia must fall to the ground. New combinations would have to be devised and, with the protection of England rejected and Russia's victories left unbalanced, the continuance of Turkish sovereignty in inevitable vassalage would have been an indisputable evil. The issue had been faced and care had been taken to reserve full freedom of action to meet either eventuality. Though the Russian and Austrian negotiations and those for the summoning of the Congress had all been brought to the point of completion, not one of them had been consummated.

The demand at Constantinople had been deferred till the other agreements were certain,—but in each case it preceded their final conclusion.

There was a reception at the Foreign Office on that Saturday evening in honour of the Queen's birthday. It was an annual function in those days,—a vast gathering of all who were distinguished in the official, political, and social worlds of London, who year by year fought their way up the great double staircase and filled the brilliantly lighted rooms beyond with a crowded blaze of gold lace and jewels, of uniforms and many-tinted raiment. The function has long been discontinued; even then it was hard to accommodate unquestionable claims to invitation with the still more unquestionable limitations of material space, and the problem has since proved insoluble. But it outlasted Lord Salisbury's tenure of office, and this entertainment was the first of a long series in which he acted as host.

To the initiated it had a dramatic background. All through the evening, while the party was in progress, news was being looked for from Constantinople. More than half the time of grace had expired,—the proposal had been before the Sultan and his Ministers for the whole of that day, and, if acceptance was intended, no reason for further delay appeared. The Foreign Secretary was confessedly expectant, but singularly undisturbed. He had pledged himself, in one alternative event, to the scrapping of all his recent labours and to such a sudden and complete reversal of his policy as would have produced a convulsion of agitation throughout Europe. But no sign of anxiety or even of pre-occupation could be detected in him. If anything, his eyes shone a little more brightly, his interchange of pleasantry and compliment with his guests was a

little gayer and quicker than usual. A slight and apparently rather pleasurable excitement was the only feeling of which he ever showed external symptom in moments of crisis.

The Sultan's acceptance arrived the next morning, the Convention being formally concluded a week later. Within the next few days the other agreements were signed, and on Sunday, June 2, Lord Salisbury signified his Government's acceptance of the invitation to the Congress which Prince Bismarck had already issued. As regarded the original dispute between England and Russia, there had been, as Lord Salisbury had anticipated, no difficulty in finding a satisfactory formula. Prince Bismarck accompanied his invitation to the Powers by a note stating that he should regard acceptance of it as indicating willingness to discuss all articles of the Treaty of San Stefano that might be brought before the Congress. Russia accepted without remark and England's requirement was thus practically complied with, though she did not insist verbally upon her original claim to have the Treaty as a whole submitted.

The completion of these various diplomatic enterprises was complicated for Lord Salisbury by an interruption of a nature which was often destined to be repeated and against which he always fretted. The facilities for hospitality on a large and dignified scale which were offered by his possession of Hatfield, were from one point of view an undoubted asset to him as Foreign Minister. Distinguished foreigners could be received there with fitting circumstance and yet with all the friendliness of private hospitality, and the wheels of diplomacy were so far oiled. But the existence of such facilities made their employment practically compulsory. Royal personages and statesmen on their travels had to be entertained—and to

be entertained at their own time, which was not always that which suited their host's convenience. Lord Salisbury's conduct of these hospitalities gave no indication of the discontents which their obligation stirred in him. He performed his part with a stately deference of manner,—a certain chivalrous courtliness where royal ladies were concerned,—which fitted perfectly into the picture and its setting,—the old house, built three hundred years before by a king's minister for the purpose of such receptions. He was indeed more at his ease at such functions than among some more everyday companies. They came in the way of business and could be classified among the duties of life. "No one expects," he used to remark with satisfied assurance, "to enjoy himself on these occasions." He was alert too for the incidental humours which belong to ceremonial observances,—sharing them with the elect in mischievous undertones while preserving outwardly an immovable gravity. But though not, perhaps, more wearisome, these parties of state were more burdensome to him than ordinary social gatherings, by reason of the close attendance upon his distinguished guests which they involved. It had to be paid for by midnight hours spent over Foreign Office boxes, and by work at double pressure when the visit was over. When the public call upon his time happened to be heavy, such added labour seemed both to himself and to onlookers irritatingly out of proportion to its return.

On the present occasion, the Crown Prince (Frederick) and Princess of Germany were in England and had intimated a wish to see Hatfield. Such an intimation coming from the Queen's daughter and her husband,—the most active partisan of English friendship at the German Court,—could not be ignored. The royal couple were invited for the week-end of

June 1–3, and a company of guests, among whom were the Prince and Princess of Wales, were asked to meet them. The party is chiefly memorable for its sinister interruption on the Sunday by the news of an anarchist attack upon the German Emperor in which the old man was wounded and which necessitated his son's instant return to Berlin. But its labours involved Lord Salisbury in an unwonted act of discourtesy to his principal ambassador. In the previous March the Cabinet had intended to send Lord Lyons to the Congress as their representative. But both persons and conditions had changed since then and it was now decided that the three Imperial Chancellors should be met on equal terms by the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. Lord Salisbury omitted to inform Lord Lyons of this decision until some days after it had been taken. "My excuse for my negligence is the prosaic one that I had not a moment of time. The agonies of a man who has to finish a difficult negotiation, and at the same time to entertain four royalties at a country house can be better imagined than described." (*June 5.*)

All was now clear for the meeting of the Congress. But there was one question which Lord Salisbury had to settle with the leader of the House of Commons before he left England,—the time and occasion for publishing the Anglo-Turkish Convention. There are circumstances under which secrecy becomes a necessary security against the propagation of ill-feeling. Every precaution had to be taken against any manufactured agitation of feeling in France on the subject of Cyprus. No opportunity must be allowed for protests to be forced from below on her Government which would have to be disregarded, and the interval between the announcement and the accomplishment of the occupation must therefore be made as short as possible.

But the occupation must wait until the Convention came into operation, which would be when the XIXth clause of the Treaty of San Stefano—that which dealt with the Russian annexations in Asia—had been brought before Congress. This, therefore, must be the date—an uncertain one—when Sir Stafford must be prepared for his announcement to Parliament. He seems to have been troubled either by this uncertainty, or by the prospect of the Opposition denunciations which would follow, and to have asked his colleague to put his requirements on paper;—the subject had evidently been already discussed between them. Lord Salisbury, in sending him a copy of the despatch which was to be presented to the House when the time for enlightenment came, accompanied it by a brief restatement both of his argument for the course adopted and of his indifference to the wrath which it might excite among his political opponents. It was conveyed in a form which Sir Stafford's sense of humour might safely be trusted to interpret, but which as a formal communication from the Foreign Minister to the leader of the House of Commons, at a moment and on a subject of the gravest international importance, is probably unique :

To Sir Stafford Northcote, June 6, 1878.

" My idea of the course of events may be expressed in the following calendar, of which, of course, the figures are imaginary :

" *June* 25. Congress reaches end of 18th article.

" *June* 25. Night : Mr. Layard is directed to get firman from Sultan and send it to Lord John Hay.[1]

" *June* 26. Congress discusses 19th article. British P.P. make earnest, but unavailing, attempts to persuade Russia not to take Kars. Then, at the

[1] Admiral in command in the Mediterranean.

end of the day, they reserve to themselves to state at the next sitting the course which will be imposed on England in consequence. Same day fleet is ordered to rendezvous near Cyprus.

"*June* 27. British P.P. communicate the Convention: Waddington [1] tears his hair, and telegraphs wildly to Toulon.

"*June* 27. Same day, Lord John Hay anchors before Famagosta.

"*June* 28. Sir Stafford Northcote lays despatch and Convention on the table of Parliament. Mr. Gladstone makes a speech four hours long on the selfishness of England and the purity of Russian motives. French Admiral arrives with three ships off Famagosta,—but finds he is too late.

"*June* 29. *Daily News* conclusively proves that the idea of taking Cyprus could only have occurred to the Semitic instincts of the Prime Minister."

[1] French Foreign Minister, and Plenipotentiary at Berlin.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BERLIN CONGRESS AND THE ASIA MINOR POLICY

The Congress opened at Berlin on the 13th of June. Lord Salisbury's journey thither was characteristic in its circumstance. His departure, in company with a staff of secretaries and Foreign Office assistants, had been fixed for Monday the 10th,—special accommodation had been reserved and all preparations made which the dignity of a plenipotentiary required. On the Monday morning, however, a private secretary appeared at Arlington Street to say that the weather on the Channel was so bad that it was doubtful whether the boat could get into Calais harbour and that all arrangements had therefore been cancelled. Home preparations were suspended and boxes partly unpacked, while the Foreign Secretary spent the morning in fretting at the pusillanimity of the company's servants and sending a series of protesting enquiries down to Charing Cross. Just before the time for the starting of the boat-train, a message was returned to say that the wind had abated and that the boat would certainly cross. There was a frenzied struggle with the luggage,—Lady Salisbury's carriage which was at the door in readiness for her afternoon drive was pressed into the service,—and with not a minute to spare Lord Salisbury successfully achieved his departure, accompanied only by his

son.[1] Word was sent to the rest of the party to follow at their leisure,—their chief exhibiting something of the glee of a truant schoolboy at the prospect of thus escaping from the pomp of their attendance and travelling to the Congress *en simple touriste*. He wrote to his wife the day after his arrival reporting the impressions received in his first interviews :

To Lady Salisbury, June 12, 1878.

" I have seen to-day Schou.—Bismarck, Beaconsfield—and the Crown Prince and Princess. I have also had a few words with Andrassy whom I am to see again to-night. The general result is favourable to our objects. The one sore point on which I was apprehensive seems, if I can judge, to take a more favourable turn. Schou. does not seem to speak confidently of his power of defending his master's views on the question of putting Turkish garrisons on the Balkans and on the Burgas shore ; and speaks of his own views and those of the Czar's military advisers as being with us. Beaconsfield—who had an hour's interview with Bismarck on arriving from Cologne last night—thought that he would support our contention. I gathered from him that he would be inclined to propose Turkish regiments consisting of Christian soldiers. . . . He looks ill—sleeps badly —did not sleep this morning till six. He has grown a beard which alters him a good deal. Andrassy is thinner and gipsyer than ever. . . . The Crown Prince sent you the most affectionate messages, and the Princess is ecstatic about Hatfield."

The next day the Congress met and there was time only for a hurried letter home, written " in great haste." It contained a phrase or two about those of the plenipotentiaries whom he had now met for the first time. Prince Gortchakoff was " a little

[1] Viscount Cranborne, afterwards 4th Marquis of Salisbury, born October 1861.

insignificant old man,—full of compliments,—but otherwise (*sic*) having evidently lost his head"; M. Waddington had "an Anglo-Saxon look and I suspect will give us some trouble." "At the Congress Bismarck was elected—made very polite speeches—but evidently meant to have everything his own way. Dizzy made a speech in English—rather a good one—urging upon the Congress the necessity of the withdrawal of the troops. The Russians opposed. Bismarck adjourned the decision till Monday." The question of the garrisoning of the Bulgarian frontier was to be canvassed during the three days' adjournment.

To Lady Salisbury, June 14, 1878.

"No great news to-day. Beaconsfield has given Schou. what he calls a dusting,—I don't know with what effect. I shall see him to-night as he dines here—but B. is evidently very proud of the performance. Our difficulty still remains there;—we both agree on the frontier of the Balkans with protection for the population south of it; but Schou. wants provisions as to the soldiers which would make the Sultan not master for strategic purposes,—and that won't do. . . .

"B. and I had to go and see Augusta[1] to-day—in evening dress! She was very foolish and B.'s compliments were a thing to hear!"

He spent that week-end at Potsdam as the guest of the Crown Prince and Princess. The old Emperor was still suffering from the results of the anarchist attempt and the Crown Prince was acting as Regent. A letter to Mr. Cross—to whom, as principal Secretary of State, the routine business of the Foreign Office had been entrusted—apologises for writing from there,—"you will think that, like Macaulay, I have

[1] The Empress Augusta, wife of the reigning Emperor William I.

chosen a palace to write from "—but "unprofitable conversations with shifty plenipotentiaries" had taken up all his time in Berlin. The Bulgarian difficulty had not materially advanced towards solution. The suggestion that the Sultan should employ Christian troops had fallen through;—"an admirable idea—only he has not got any";—and the Czar would not hear of Mahommedans being used.

To Mr. Cross, June 15, 1878.

"There we stick at present. Bismarck talks of sending Schou. back to St. Petersburg to get new concessions. There is no doubt the presence of Gortchakoff materially complicates matters and that if some kindly fit of gout would take him off we should move much faster. Meanwhile I am personally somewhat anxious—because neither the agreements we have entered into, nor the pledges we have made as to the Christian races have impressed themselves very deeply on the Chief's mind; and in those matters I have to act as a 'flapper.'

"If this Bulgarian question can be satisfactorily settled, all the other matters will quickly find their level. By that expression I do not mean that they will not take time; but that they are not likely to produce much friction. Andrassy has a heap of minute questions touching Montenegro and Servia; but I believe they are nearly arranged. Bismarck is a little disgusted with his friend as to the Bosnian question. 'I have heard,' he said, 'of people refusing to eat their pigeon unless it was shot and roasted for them; but I have never heard of any one refusing to eat it unless their jaws were forced open and it was pushed down their throats.' But Andrassy insists not only that the Turk shall cede it, but that the Turk shall beg him as a favour to take it. The poor Turks make a wry face. Submit to a cession—yes! they will say Kismet. Ask for an occupation

—yes, they can even make up their minds to that. But to ask to be allowed to cede a rich province to a Power that has done nothing for them is more than they think their Softas will stand. . . . What a nuisance this publication in the *Globe* is![1] It is evidently Russian."

To Lady Salisbury, June 17, 1878.

"The civilities of the Crown Princess have caused me such a desperate scamper that I have not been able to find a moment to write till to-night. At present matters are going fairly well. The *Globe* revelations have not done as much harm with the Austrians as we feared. Andrassy had rather an impression we had thrown him over about Montenegro—which appears to have come from one of Beüst's eternal misunderstandings. Elliot had warned me that such an impression was in existence at Vienna. Andrassy was in a coy state about Bosnia. He had the consent of everybody in his pocket; but he was shy of proposing to occupy it himself. Germany was quite willing to help him by proposing it—but he thought that would expose him to the charge of 'dépendance.' So he wanted us to do it. I consented, naturally, without difficulty,—and found no difficulty with B. Austrians have been very grateful and have backed us up manfully, both at the Congress yesterday and at a meeting of the three Powers this morning. Thus far we have done very well. We have carried (*sauf* a reference to St. Petersburg) the chief points we were anxious about as to the province south of the Balkans;—especially the military occupation of the Balkans and the sea coast. How long the affair will last it is impossible to guess. . . . I have been hardly able to do anything from fatigue up to this point—for the festivities of the Crown Princess have taken up time and every one has had to be called on. But I hope to do better now.

"Bismarck has been very autobiographic. He

[1] Of the full text of the Salisbury-Schouvaloff Agreement.

sent for Dizzy and me the other day,—nominally to talk business but apparently merely for the purpose of autobiography. He gave me again his griefs against the vanity of Gortchakoff, and went on: 'When he chose in 1875 to invent that French scare, climbing on my shoulders in order to pose as peace-maker before Europe, I told him that, though I should continue to value the alliance of Russia, all confidence was at an end between us. After that, in 1876, he wanted to make war on Austria in order to take Galicia, and he asked me what Germany would do in such a case. I said I was convinced that Austria would not go to war with him and I did not believe he would venture to make war with Austria—and that I had no time for answering purely academical questions. But then, as I saw a good deal of Count Andrassy just then, I told him that Russia had not been to war for twenty years; that she evidently had got too much blood; and it was much better she should go to war with Turkey than with Austria. The plan was all very well managed, only the Austrians wanted to do the thing stingily without spending a florin. Napoleon always said of them, "Ils sont toujours en retard, d'un million, d'une campagne, ou d'une politique,"—and so it was. They did not go into Servia as I advised them just after Plevna—and so they missed the "joint" (juncture).'"

To Lady Salisbury, June 20, 1878.

"Matters do not look so well to-day. The Russians are wriggling a good deal on the subject of the military occupation of the southern province, and some time may be required in order to persuade them to be skinned quietly. Our meetings in Congress are perfectly futile. . . . Everything in reality depends on our private fights over Bulgaria. We are to receive the Emperor's answer to our latest proposals to-morrow." [1]

[1] It was an acceptance and was brought by special messenger from St. Petersburg. Lord Beaconsfield's—or rather his private secretary's—comments

A curious interview with the two Russian plenipotentiaries, described afterwards in conversation by Lord Salisbury, must have occurred in the course of these "private fights." They had come to see him by appointment to discuss some minor issue connected with the Bulgarian question. But no sooner had Prince Gortchakoff entered the room than he announced imperatively his intention of repudiating the whole of the concessions which had been agreed to on that question in London. Lord Salisbury, as astonished as he was indignant, pointed out that this would mean the immediate breaking up of the Congress. The old man refused to listen to him, petulantly reasserted his purpose, and, without any formal leave-taking, flung himself angrily out of the room. Count Schouvaloff had remained throughout in the background, a silent spectator of the scene. He followed his chief out, but as he reached the door, he stepped back, touched Lord Salisbury on the arm and whispered, "Attendez-moi,—je reviens. Faites pas attention—ce sont là un tas de bêtises." [1] He returned, in effect, after a brief interval and entered upon a quiet business discussion of the dependent issue, without alluding further to the main question or to his chief's outburst upon it—which indeed was never referred to again by any one. It may very likely have had a more rational foundation than at

upon this conclusion (*Life*, vol. vi. pp. 323-326) must be taken in a dramatic rather than a historic sense. They assume that the Czar's message of surrender, which must have left St. Petersburg not later than the 20th, was determined by an interview which took place at Berlin between Lord Beaconsfield and Prince Bismarck on the afternoon of the 21st.

The resolute attitude of the Englishmen before which the Russians yielded was effectually expressed in the Prime Minister's oratory and in such private interviews as that in which the recorded "dusting" was administered to Count Schouvaloff a week before,—but not in an ultimatum delivered twenty-four hours after the battle had been won.

[1] "Wait for me,—I am coming back. Pay no attention—this is all a pack of nonsense."

first appeared. It emphasised in private what the Prince proclaimed in public by staying away from the sitting of Congress at which the Bulgarian terms were passed,—his refusal to share in his junior's responsibility for the humiliation of concession. It was a responsibility fully appreciated by the man who bore it. When, after the signing of the Treaty, the assembled envoys were bidding each other good-bye, the Englishmen jestingly appealed to their colleagues for sympathy in respect of the task which now lay before them of defending their action in Parliament, —" aux Chambres." Count Schouvaloff grimly replied with a significant shrug of his shoulders,—" J'ai devant moi une tâche bien autrement difficile,—me défendre *dans* une chambre." [1]

The Asiatic side of the settlement was complicated by an outbreak of Jingo feeling in London. If Lord Salisbury was right in his suspicion that the publication of the Agreement was in reality of Russian origin, it proved, from the Russian point of view, to have been a perilous experiment.[2] The object was presumably that both sides of Count Schouvaloff's bargain should be presented together before the public opinion of his own country. But the immediate result was to defeat a similar precautionary purpose on the part of the British Government. The revelation of the Asiatic concessions without that of the counterpoise which had been provided for them roused great anger among its supporters in Parliament, who clamoured for their withdrawal.

[1] " I have a far more difficult task before me,—to defend myself *in* a room." The play upon the word " chambre " cannot be reproduced in English.

[2] Charles Marvin, who communicated the Agreement to the *Globe*, was employed as a temporary clerk at the Foreign Office and had no doubt had possible opportunities of access to the document there. But it was never shown that they were sufficient to enable him to take a copy of it. He was said to have been half Russian by birth.

To Lady Salisbury, June 22, 1878.

"It looks as if our troubles about Bulgaria were over. The Russians have very nearly given way on all material points, and I hope that by Monday they will quite have done so. Austria is still pulling with us heartily. Germany leans rather to the side of Russia,—but with an evident intention that there should be peace. . . . Batoum is a great bother. Its real importance is not very large, but the mass of people are so ignorant about it that a few strenuous Jingoes have contrived to persuade the world it is a great matter. We shall make what efforts we can, either to get it back or to have it converted into something of the nature of a free port. . . .

"Bismarck has shaved,—and sits upon the Turks mercilessly."

To Lady Salisbury, June 23, 1878.

"We received from Layard information that the Sultan had talked to his physician about the Convention, and the physician had told Condouriotis.[1] As far as I can find out, the physician had only told him of a verbal agreement. However, the same day, Andrassy was talking to me and he introduced the matter incidentally. I told him that nothing was finally arranged and I begged him to hold his tongue. I have heard no more and do not know how many know it. But I feel it may come out at any time. Northcote is in considerable tremor—being frightened out of his life by the Jingo manifestations at home. The chief is in a puzzled state of mind—wishing to stay here and finish the Congress, which he enjoys particularly—and feeling that, if he is not there to explain, there may be trouble. 'They are all middle-class men,' he kept saying, 'and I have always observed through life that middle-class men are afraid of responsibility.' Northcote, he subsequently ad-

[1] The Greek Minister at Constantinople.

mitted, was not a middle-class man; but then he had been early made a bureaucrat and had never lost the feeling. As to his own mode of proceeding, he is not exactly false, but he has such a perfect disregard for facts that it is almost impossible for him to run true. To-day, talking of Waddington, he said with great contempt, 'The man is a doctrinaire—he is convinced by his own reasoning—he is the slave of his own syllogisms.' This makes him very difficult to work with because, whenever he does handle a detail, he almost always does with it exactly the reverse of what he intended. . . . Our affairs are going smoothly enough. We have no difficulty in carrying out our own programme, our difficulty is in meeting the extravagant nonsense talked at home about Batoum."

To Lady Salisbury, June 23, 1878.

"Six hours out of my day have been taken away by that tiresome Crown Princess asking me to lunch at Potsdam. So I have but a minute to write. There is no news since I wrote yesterday—except that my chief is distressing himself very much about the supposed designs of Bismarck. What with deafness, ignorance of French, and Bismarck's extraordinary mode of speech, Beaconsfield has the dimmest idea of what is going on—understands everything cross-ways—and imagines a perpetual conspiracy. He is of course much disgusted at the Jingo outbreak in England."

To Lady Salisbury, June 24, 1878.

"We have done little in Congress to-day beyond discussing the details of the Bulgarian frontier. Bismarck is decidedly losing his temper. He never loses an opportunity of informing us that he does not care two straws for the 'bonheur de ces gens là-bas,' and objects to considering any question which is not a question of peace and war.

"So far as I can see at present the thing may last a fortnight longer. We have nearly finished Bulgaria —and entirely in our own sense. Next come Montenegro and Bosnia, which will be settled chiefly as the Austrians desire it. Then will come Bessarabia and the Asiatic questions, in which Russia will have her own way—with the reserves you know of. Where the Greek question is to come in I don't quite know.

"Heat here is extreme,—the place detestable. At Potsdam there are mosquitoes—here there are minor Powers. I don't know which is worst."

A few days after this Lady Salisbury joined her husband in Berlin and the letters to her cease.

The nervousness of Ministers in England extended, most unnecessarily, to the effect which might be produced by the publication of the Convention. Sir Stafford wrote to urge that it should be deferred as long as possible; in the present state of feeling, if the Government could be charged with having sold Kars and Batoum for Cyprus, "we should be out before you could get home." (*June 20.*) Lord Salisbury responded with a sympathetic wish that it might be possible to postpone it until the Prime Minister could get back. "The Jingoes require to be calmed in their own language and he is the only one among us who speaks it fluently." (*June 23.*) Lord Beaconsfield himself became seriously alarmed. He urged his colleague to warn the Russians that unless they made concessions, they might at any moment find themselves faced by another and more warlike Government in England. He at the same time deprecated strongly the prosecution which, by Lord Salisbury's instructions, had been instituted against Marvin, the Foreign Office clerk who was overtly responsible for the communication of the Anglo-Russian Agreement to the press. (*July 1.*)

To Lord Beaconsfield, July 2, 1878.

"I admit that the combination of yours and Northcote's opinion against the Marvin proceedings constitute a formidable argument against them. In their present form I do not care very much about them myself. My original instructions were to use the threat of legal proceedings in order to extract from him evidence against the Russians, or the *Globe* manager; and if I had any chance of bringing the matter home to either of them, I should be against giving it up; for the offices ought to be protected against this sort of enterprise. But Marvin by himself is too small game to be worth flying at.[1]

"Batoum certainly has made a great impression on Northcote. It is quite new, for his voice was distinctly given against pressing to make Batoum a free port a month ago. Evidently there has been some violent revulsion of feeling in our party. I believe it is the hot weather. I will do all I can to frighten Schou."

He had had a scheme of his own with regard to Batoum which, if it had been carried through, though it would scarcely have eased the parliamentary situation, might have had interesting results otherwise. He hoped to utilise the difficulty for the purpose of securing a greater freedom of passage through the Dardanelles. Under the modification of the Crimean settlement which was agreed upon in 1871, the Straits, which had previously been closed under an international guarantee to all save Turkish ships of war, were opened to those which the Sultan might invite to pass through to his assistance, but to those only. In view of Turkey's growing feebleness, Lord Salisbury had conceived grave doubts as to the wisdom

[1] The prosecution failed;—under the law as it then stood it was found that the offence charged was not punishable. The Official Secrets Act was passed in consequence of this incident.

of leaving her in such exclusive and guaranteed command of an international highway. In the previous February he had been impressed by the ease with which the Russians had frightened her into using her powers against the admittedly friendly approach of the British fleet and among the objects of policy which he had enumerated to Lord Beaconsfield in March he had included "security for the free passage of the Straits at all times, as if they were open sea." [1] In April he had written to Lord Odo Russell that he should be glad "if the Straits could be declared as open as the Sound," and in another letter had suggested that they should either be neutralised and their fortification forbidden, or that the right to blockade them in time of war should be recognised and freed from international impediments.[2] Unluckily, in the May of the previous year the maintenance of the '71 settlement had been proclaimed by the British Government as one of its conditions of neutrality, and, during the London negotiations, Count Schouvaloff had been on strong ground in refusing to acquiesce in England's abandonment of her own requirement. But if Russia should now insist upon full rights over Batoum, including that of fortifying it as a naval station, the menace offered to the Bosphorus might be claimed as introducing a new element into the situation, which would free England from the hamper of her earlier demand. Lord Salisbury consulted his colleagues at home upon the project. In a letter to Mr. Cross, after pointing out the opportunity offered, and describing the terms of relaxation which he proposed to exact, he closed with a comment upon the main objection which he foresaw that he would have to meet.

[1] See above, p. 214.
April 17, April 10. See above, pp. 244, 242.

To Mr. Cross, June 20, 1878.

"Of course this measure is open to all the objections which used to be urged against throwing open the Straits altogether. The answer is that the exclusion of Russia from the Mediterranean is not so great a gain to us as the loss resulting from our exclusion from the Black Sea; because we are much the strongest as a naval Power.

"I should very much like to know what you think of this proposal. The Chief entirely agrees with me." [1]

The home Cabinet, however, were faithful to Crimean traditions, and Sir Stafford reported that, with the exception of Lord John Manners, they were unanimously opposed to any steps which might result in the opening of the Straits. The opportunity for deciding between the two views did not arise, as the status of Batoum was in the event determined independently through a somewhat confused negotiation between the two pairs of British and Russian plenipotentiaries.

To Mr. Cross, July 10, 1878.

"I am afraid our negotiations about Batoum have not gone nearly as well as I had at one time hoped. The story is rather complicated. I wonder whether I can make it understood. By direction of the Chief I opened negotiations with Schouvaloff, asking for an independent Khanate including Batoum,

[1] The actual proposal was for England to withdraw from the international guarantee and also reserve to herself the right of going to the Sultan's assistance, with or without his summons, whenever she judged him to be acting under duresse. As the other Powers would certainly have made a similar declaration and claimed a similar discretion, the change would have amounted, as Lord Salisbury admits in this letter, to the removal of all Treaty obstacles to the free passage of the Straits. It would also have given to every Power whose right of entry had thus been asserted and admitted a *locus standi* in objecting to their effective fortification,—thus in fact rendering them as "open as the Sound."

and promising in return—immediate evacuation both of that place and Varna by the Turks—and the *status quo* as to the Straits. He promised to consider it. Next day he told me that he had not had much hope, but that he had none left now, for he found that Lord Beaconsfield had been to see Prince Gortchakoff and the latter had telegraphed to St. Petersburg that Lord B. would be perfectly satisfied with the declaration of Batoum to be a free port. This was, I believe, an entire fabrication;—but it naturally knocked my negotiation on the head and we had to be satisfied with a free port. We have tried to wriggle in words to make it also a 'disarmed' port, but we have not got more than the words 'essentiellement commercial.' At one time I had got 'exclusivement commercial,' but Gortchakoff got at Beaconsfield yesterday morning when he was very ill, and persuaded him that the two words meant the same thing—and that the latter would be offensive to the Emperor. I have been only able, therefore, to get some words on to the protocol indicating that it was to be 'only commercial,' and that in consenting to the *status quo* in respect to the Straits, we did so only on the condition that Batoum was not to be constituted into a menace for the Bosphorus. And that was the end of our negotiations as to Batoum.

"Then came the Lazi[1]—which disappeared by a very similar process. On Friday Schouvaloff promised me territory which should exclude from Russia some 90,000 souls, mainly Mussulmans. But he told me Gortchakoff was keeping this matter to negotiate himself with B. and that his communications were to be confidential. Of course I told B. of all this, and fancying the matter settled, I allowed the question of the Straits to be decided in Congress. Schouvaloff brought me in due course a map showing a considerable territory to be given back for this purpose;

[1] The Moslem inhabitants of Lazistan—the hinterland of Batoum. Their violent resistance to the Russian annexation greatly reinforced the agitation in England against it.

still telling me it was quite confidential, because Gortchakoff had resolved on keeping the negotiation strictly between himself and Beaconsfield. But when B. came to him next morning (Monday) he would give nothing—and they separated. In the evening I asked G. whether it was not possible to arrange anything. 'I will only see Lord Beaconsfield,' was his answer, and this he repeated twice. That evening Schou. came again and left with me the map showing the district of 80,000 (*sic*) souls he offered to me. The next day (Tuesday) B. went to Gortchakoff at eleven. In about half an hour he came back to me with the boundary marked on a map as Schou. had shown it—and asked me if that was right. I said it was. He returned and accepted it. We met in Congress at two. G. produced the map marked with a totally different line, not giving half the population, and swore it was the right one. It was in vain B. and I swore the contrary. He faced me out—the matter was referred to a Committee of Congress—the members—rather sulky about Cyprus, and not knowing what to believe—voted for a sort of compromise, and we were done. The old wretch knew that B. was short-sighted and ignorant of detail, and took the opportunity of substituting another line. Schou. acknowledges we were done but professes his inability to help.

"All this is only for your private eye—but I wanted to explain lest I should have seemed to have misled you by too sanguine telegrams.

"Chief has been—and remains—bad with his asthma—and was not able to attend Congress to-day."

During the last week of its session, interest in the proceedings of the Congress was overshadowed by the publication of the Anglo-Turkish Convention. That some form of mutually profitable arrangement had been come to between England and Turkey must have been suspected from the outset among the

statesmen assembled at Berlin. Lord Salisbury's hints both to Germany and Russia had been sufficiently broad. A more precise knowledge percolated gradually through various surreptitious channels and it became increasingly doubtful whether the announcement could be deferred as was originally intended until, by the passing of the Asiatic clauses of the Treaty, the Convention had ceased to be hypothetical. On July 7 Lord Salisbury resolved to avert possible unpleasantness by communicating it at once officially and confidentially to the French Foreign Minister. He accompanied the information with explanations and assurances which had entirely satisfactory results. When the news became public, though the Paris newspapers indulged in a certain number of angry articles, the French Government displayed none of the resentment which had been dreaded. The confidence was made only just in time. On the following day the substance of the arrangement appeared in the pages of the London *Daily Telegraph* and the Convention was formally announced in the House of Commons that afternoon. The same day British men-of-war appeared before Larnaca and the Union Jack was hoisted in Cyprus three days later, on July 11. There was criticism on the continent but it was rather envious than bitter. Appreciation was general of the smoothness and completeness of the performance. England, alone among the great Powers concerned, had safeguarded her interests without raising a ripple of disturbance in Europe. In the ministerial lobbies at Westminster approval was immediate and developed rapidly into enthusiasm.

To Mr. Cross, July 12, 1878.

" I am very glad to hear all has gone so well about the Convention. Here it has produced no unpleasant

feeling to speak of; perhaps a slight *rapprochement* of Italians and French to Russians on small matters of boundary may be traced to that cause. But I do not think either Frenchmen or Russians are much disturbed; Austrians and Germans are evidently glad. The Italians are unhappy—not because we have got Cyprus—but because they have got nothing. I fear poor Corti[1] will lose his place for his moderation. I was sorry it came out on Monday as I had just had the copies made out to send to him—when I heard of the *Daily Telegraph's* indiscretion. Fortunately—very fortunately—Waddington had been squared the day before."

The Congress lasted barely more than four weeks —the rapidity of its procedure being mainly due to the vigorous action of its President. The earlier Anglo-Russian dispute had postponed its assemblage to a date at which it ran serious risk of interfering with his annual visit to the baths at Kissingen, which he believed to be indispensable for his health. He made no secret of his resolve to avert such a catastrophe, and the envoys were kept to their work with relentless energy. At any cost of labour between the sittings the time-table had to be kept, and all unnecessary display of eloquence was fiercely snubbed. Efficiency probably did not suffer on that account. Details were devolved wholesale upon Boards and Commissions to be subsequently instituted, and the working out of the settlement whose lines had been fixed in a month took more than a year to accomplish. The Treaty was signed on July 13 and two days later the British plenipotentiaries returned to London where a triumphant reception awaited them. It represented a reaction from the alternating dread of war or of humiliating surrender by which the country had been haunted for the past months. Lord

[1] Italian Foreign Minister and Plenipotentiary.

Beaconsfield's declaration that he had brought back "Peace with Honour" became famous because it exactly expressed the quality of the relief that was generally felt. But feeling among Anglo-Saxons rarely finds expression spontaneously unless it is combatively inspired—by a military victory or a parliamentary election or a football match. On this occasion, at least, Lord Salisbury was persuaded that the party machine had assisted in organising the popular excitement of the moment. It was not until he reached Dover that he learnt what was in store for him in London and his vexation was made clear. He would not admit that it arose only from his personal dislike to such displays. The "reception" would emphasise those sensational features of the Government policy whose existence he was anxious to minimise and which he was convinced were fundamentally antipathetic to the temper of his fellow-countrymen. The wirepullers were making a great blunder, he declared, "and they will find it out at the polls."

He accepted another distasteful reward with more resignation. Two knighthoods of the Garter happened to be vacant and it had occurred either to the Queen or to Lord Beaconsfield to take advantage of the coincidence to give honour to both plenipotentiaries simultaneously. An obstacle to the plan was recognised in Lord Salisbury's well-known aversion to all forms of external distinction. Mr. Montague Corry, the Prime Minister's devoted friend and private secretary, took Lady Salisbury into his confidence. The historical traditions of the order, the romance of old nobility by which it was surrounded, made it to his chief the most coveted of all rewards. But he was steadfastly determined to accept no honour that was not shared by his colleague,

to whose support in the hour of adversity he held that he owed so much, and who had pulled, as he himself expressed it, "the labouring oar" in the present achievement. If Lord Salisbury were to refuse the Queen's offer, the Prime Minister would certainly refuse it also, though—so his friend declared—the disappointment would go near to break his heart. Lord Salisbury was not proof against such an appeal—though still always maintaining that Lord Castlereagh's undecorated coat amidst the stars and ribbons at the Congress of Vienna was the true distinction. He executed himself handsomely—and, with a touch of unproclaimed and undetected irony, saved his chief from all possibility of embarrassment by inverting the rôles. In the letter which conveyed his acceptance of the honour, he expressed his gratification that Lord Beaconsfield had complied with his own earnest wish and was prepared "to accept the same distinction at the same time." (*July 22.*)

The Congress of Berlin fulfilled its immediate object in bringing a dangerous crisis to a peaceful close. Its permanent importance lay in the purpose which it represented,—the unanimous refusal of the rest of Europe to allow Russia's claim to predominate in the Near East. The part which her two Imperial allies took in this refusal and the enduring resentment which their action aroused in her were events which make the Congress a point of vital departure in the history of the world. The actual provisions of the Treaty which it formulated offered no permanent solution to the problems dealt with. Finality was, in fact, impossible while the Turkish Empire endured, and in his private correspondence Lord Salisbury never claims for his own proposals more than a prospect of transitional stability.

The provision which he urged most insistently proved, in fact, the most ephemeral and was reversed under conditions of peculiar irony. Seven years after the signing of the Treaty, the divided Bulgaria was united with Lord Salisbury's own sympathy and consent,—if not with his active diplomatic assistance, —and in the teeth of Russia's sullen antagonism. The course of events which led to this exchange of rôles is illuminating upon the disabilities of statesmen. Rarely has the ignorance which envelops political effort been more strikingly exemplified. The statesmen assembled at Berlin were fully alive to the rivalry between Greek and Slav, but no indication appears that any of them, or—what is more remarkable,—any of their expert advisers, were even conscious of the still more bitter feud which divided Southern Slav from Bulgar. Count Andrassy, in his professed reliance upon the ingratitude of peoples, was prophetically fortunate, but he seems only to have been doing homage to a general law. There was excuse for this ignorance. The old enmity had found no external expression within the period of modern history. For four hundred years it had been compelled to a truce under the common tyranny of the Turk. Russia, the Power most immediately concerned in knowing the truth, had based her whole policy upon the assumption of its extinction. Without any suggestion of incongruity she had formally adopted Bulgaria into the Pan-Slavist family,—had sedulously cultivated her sympathies with it through years of elaborate propaganda and individual education;—had poured out blood and treasure in a war waged primarily for her deliverance. By friend and foe alike she had been accepted as the principal representative of the Slav cause in Turkey. Servia herself—though no doubt with qualified enthusiasm—

had joined in the war by which she was liberated. But hardly had that liberation been accomplished and Servia become secure in her own recognised independence, than the two peoples flew at each others' throats and their enmity has ever since been the most dominant factor in Balkan politics. Inevitably the feud was extended to Servia's kinsmen and champions, and in an incredibly short space of time Bulgaria's claim to the frontiers which Pan-Slavism had prepared for her had acquired the aspect of an anti-Slav demonstration. It is a remarkable instance of the persistence of race hatred under every influence making for its discouragement, and suggests the reflection that an alien rule, through its very contempt for the passions which it controls, may sometimes act as a safeguard to the world's peace.

Whether the issue would have been the same if Russia had succeeded, according to her intention, in establishing her authority in the new province from the moment of its liberation must remain open to question. "Encore une population insoumise," was Count Schouvaloff's undisturbed comment upon the resistance of the Lazi to incorporation in the empire of their deliverers—and their discontent never impaired the political effect of Russia's annexation. The settlement that was averted when the Treaty of San Stefano was torn up might, therefore, had it been enacted, have justified Lord Salisbury's fears. Nor were these inconsistent with his more permanent scepticism as to the enduring vitality of the Russian menace. A belief in the approaching disappearance of a disease does not warrant indifference as to its present infection. But it is probably true that the importance which he—with others—attached to the Bulgarian issue during the negotiations of this summer suffered from the exaggerating influence which con-

flict always engenders and from which he was too much of a born fighter to remain free.

This issue had been virtually closed before the Congress began, and by the time it ended his interest had become entirely transferred to the prospects opened out by the Anglo-Turkish Convention. In Asia his policy was not limited, as in Europe, to the purposes of negative prevention;—it was positive and had in it the germ of growth. It had already sensibly expanded since its first inception, and his imagination was now reaching out to a further development of it. It was in this constructive aftergrowth that it was least successful. The settlement of the immediate difficulty left little room for criticism. On the one hand, peace—and an unembittered peace—had been preserved, Russia receiving substantial satisfaction for the sacrifices which she had made;—on the other, her further advance in Asiatic Turkey had been arrested and England's authority in the Near and Middle East had been very notably strengthened. The diplomatic achievement was undeniable and won a lasting reputation for its author. But the peoples of Asia Minor were not, in the event, rescued from misgovernment, and the vision which was now beginning to occupy Lord Salisbury's dreams of a new civilisation in these regions to be evolved under British auspices did not materialise. Opinions will probably still differ as to how far his failure was due to the inherent difficulty of the task attempted, and how far to purely extraneous causes connected with the working of our parliamentary institutions at home.

These were already in operation. From the moment of its publication the Convention and the policy which it represented were fatally dragged into the forefront of the party battle at Westminster.

They were the principal subjects of controversy in the parliamentary debates which followed the return of the plenipotentiaries from Berlin, as they became later the object of Mr. Gladstone's most furious denunciations in his Midlothian campaigns.

In the House of Lords the Convention was attacked mainly for the vagueness and largeness of the commitments which were involved in the pledge of resistance to further Russian advance. Lord Salisbury confined himself there to a defence of it from that point of view. "The question we have to ask ourselves is whether the responsibility which we have incurred is greater than the responsibility which we should have incurred if we had left the thing alone." Once the Government had come to the conclusion that it could not safely allow Mesopotamia and Asia Minor to fall into Russian hands, its only wise and prudent course was to announce the fact beforehand. A similar frankness would have averted the Crimean War. In recording a pledge which made it clear beyond the possibility of doubt that further annexations would not be tolerated, we were playing into the hands of Russia's more prudent counsellors and taking the strongest security for future peace.[1]

The following week, in addressing a number of Tory supporters gathered to congratulate their two leaders, he touched upon the more positive aspects of his policy.[2] Lord Beaconsfield had spoken of him as having "pulled the labouring oar" in their late achievement and as being the man to whom "the English share in the result was chiefly due"; and in opening his speech he responded by referring to his chief as one "whose presence at the Congress had

[1] Hansard, July 18, 1878.
[2] Conservative banquet in Knightsbridge, July 27.

produced an effect such as no other living man could have produced" ;—appropriate and discriminating compliments in both instances. He then went on to denounce the partisanship which, throughout this critical period, had been displayed by Opposition speakers and writers. In the light of his own consciousness of concentrated effort for the maintenance of peace, its obstructive intention appeared utterly indefensible.

"Every calumny, every misconstruction that malignant ingenuity could invent, was paraded forth in order to lessen our influence and hinder our efforts ; and at the precise moment when it was of vital importance that Europe should understand that England was in earnest, every nerve was strained to make England seem infirm of purpose and impotent in action."

To this torrent of abuse he attributed much of the Government's present popularity. It was also due to their having striven "to pick up the broken thread of England's old Imperial traditions."

"For a short time there have been men eminent in public affairs who have tried to persuade you that all the past history of England was a mistake—that the duty of England, the interest of England, was to confine herself solely to her own insular forces, to cultivate commerce, to accumulate riches, and not, as it was said, to entangle herself in foreign politics. They were men who disdained empire, who objected to colonies, and who grumbled even at the possession of India. Even for their own low purpose the policy of these men was a mistake."

He referred to the unanimity with which the inhabitants of Cyprus—of many different creeds and races—had welcomed our occupation, in flattering contrast to the resistance which was simultaneously

being offered to Russia in Lazistan and to Austria by the Moslem population of Bosnia. It was due to the reputation for efficient and disinterested administration which England had acquired by her government of India.

"Have we a right to throw away, to hide under a bushel, to conceal in a corner, such power and influence as this, merely because we might at some distant time and in some conceivable circumstances, add to our responsibility? I am told that, in the task of aiding and counselling the Ottoman Empire to bring the blessing of civilisation to some of the fairest portions of the earth, we shall be hampered by the jealousy of other Powers. I utterly refuse to believe it. When they find what our policy really is, that we are there merely to extend to others the blessings we ourselves enjoy; when they find that we welcome their competition, that we invite every trade, that we grudge success to no nationality; that the one object we have in view is that peace and order shall be maintained, and that races and creeds which for centuries back have lived in feud should henceforth live in amity and goodwill, then I believe all idea of jealousy will vanish and that they will heartily co-operate with us in our civilising mission."

The speaker had entered upon his Asia Minor policy frankly in defence of England's threatened interests; now that her right to interference had been admitted, it had become the opportunity for a "civilising mission." The sequence of aims was very characteristically British. Englishmen have suffered much in reputation by a tendency on the part of critics—and sometimes of mistaken friends—to invert the order of this sequence. They become subject to the charge of posing as crusaders with a covert eye to eventual profit,—whereas they are really instinctive empire-builders with a peculiar capacity for

altruistic and efficient acceptance of the responsibilities that result.

This speech indicates the lines along which Lord Salisbury's mind was now working. While he was still at Berlin, he had sketched in a letter to Sir Henry Layard [1] the direction which in his view reform ought to follow in Asiatic Turkey.

To Sir Henry Layard, June 25, 1878.

"I hope the end of these negotiations may be to draw a wall across the Peninsula of the Balkans and across Armenia, which shall give a respite to Turkey for twenty or thirty years. If any future remains to the Empire, this interval should be made use of. I should deprecate the attempt to establish complicated occidental forms of government;—India furnishes a far safer model than any state in Europe. If you can obtain intelligent governors with a tolerably secure tenure for a short term of years and a pure administration of justice, a great progress will have been made. But this can hardly be done without the employment of Europeans. Is there any chance of your being able to do that? I do not mean in such posts as finance agents or Custom House superintendents;—where you really want Europeans is in the governing posts—in the offices which have hitherto been made nests of corruption. . . . I do not know how far you will feel it to be practicable to go in this direction; any attempt to reform the Empire by using Englishmen in the inferior places without using them in the superior would, I fear, only end in disappointment. They have done considerable things in Egypt,—but it is because they have had superior commands. They have done very little in China because they have never had positions in which their qualities of government were felt.

"In any scheme of reform, I believe your attention

[1] Mr. Layard had been given the Grand Cross of the Bath on June 8, in recognition of his negotiation of the Anglo-Turkish Convention.

will be far more usefully directed to persons than to paper institutions. Good officers, well selected for a length of time, will create suitable traditions of administration which will gradually harden into institutions, and, made this way, reformed institutions will regenerate a people. But if they are merely written in a pretentious law, they will have no other effect but to disturb the few traditions that are left and to give perpetual subject-matter for diplomatic wrangling."

On August 8 a despatch to Constantinople conveyed formal proposals for a scheme of reform along the lines indicated. Under its provisions the five or six vilayets in Asiatic Turkey were to have governors appointed for a fixed term of years, with safeguards against capricious dismissal, and in each vilayet the virtual control of the police, the judicature, and the collection of taxes was to be in the hands of Europeans. No suggestion was made for any constitutional change, —which in proportion to its uselessness would probably have been far more welcome to the Sultan's Government than the measures actually proposed. Lord Salisbury preceded and followed this despatch by letters expanding his scheme in further detail and instructing Sir Henry Layard to press urgently for its immediate acceptance. No time was to be lost ;— "the Sultan's inclination to come to an agreement and our power of insisting upon it will diminish with each succeeding month." (*August 7.*)

There was one factor in the situation which suggested a method of persuasion more effective than that of verbal appeal. The financial position of the Ottoman Empire had been made desperate by the war. Its Treasury was empty,—its administration, both military and civil, was unpaid,—its soldiers were half-starved, and even the meagre rations which they received were provided with the utmost difficulty. A

universal and rapidly depreciating paper currency had raised prices to a fabulous height and was producing misery and dangerous discontent in every province. All surpluses of revenue were already hypothecated to the interest of existing debts; no money could be raised without outside support, and, even before the Congress closed, the Sultan had been appealing to the British Government for assistance in obtaining it.

On August 5 Lord Salisbury made a suggestion to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was tentative in character,—its opportunity being a letter from Sir Stafford Northcote consulting his colleague as to the advantage of encouraging a private project for the construction of a railway to Baghdad. The project emanated from an embryo company promoted by the Duke of Sutherland,—a man widely interested in amateur finance and, politically, a strong believer in the future of Turkey.

To Sir Stafford Northcote, August 5, 1878.

"I return the enclosed with thanks. I hope you will have early to-morrow my draft despatch to Layard about reforms. I have been thinking of the matter every way: I don't see my way to working in the reforms as one of the accidents of the railway. But though it can hardly be done so diplomatically and formally, it may very likely,—if the railway comes to anything,—be the practical upshot. I mean we shall get the promise of the reforms, which will not be kept; we shall set to work on the railway; we shall get or claim the right to defend the railway, and then we shall carry out with a strong hand what had been promised. All this may happen, *if* the railway becomes a reality. But can anything be a reality in the hands of the Duke of Sutherland, and Sir Arnold Kemball, and a list of directors as long as my arm?

"Assuming a pliant Parliament (a chimerical assumption, I fear) the matter can be brought about by presenting to the Sultan three documents :

"1. In the first he agrees on the reforms in the terms of my draft despatch.

"2. In the second he makes concession of a railway from Alexandretta to Baghdad to persons named by the British Government, with land ten miles each side of line : the English Government guaranteeing $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on 500 miles of railway at £5000 a mile ; a liability = £62,500 a year at the outside. Proceeds after 6 per cent to be divided equally between Ottoman creditors and shareholders.

"3. In the third the English Government promises to pay £120,000 a year of what is due from it on account of Cyprus to the Bank of England, which will receive orders from the Porte to pay the same as dividends to the holders of a new loan of three millions (4 per cent) : Porte engaging never to demand, in any case, retrocession of Cyprus so long as the principal is unpaid.

"But I fear these are dreams."

Sir Stafford's answer was not encouraging, and, in fact, the Cyprus revenues were found to be already pledged. Meanwhile the appeals from Constantinople for financial help became more insistent. What was the use, the Sultan and his Ministers protested, of talking to them about reforms when they knew not where to turn for a penny. A loan of six millions would enable them to meet their most urgent needs ; —would England raise it for them ?—and the Cyprus tribute came again to the fore as a suggested security. Lord Salisbury brought the appeal before the Cabinet.

To Sir Henry Layard, August 20, 1878.

"I wish we had seen our way to immediate action in the Sultan's behalf. But we found that the

hypothecation of the Ottoman revenues stood in the way of any plan based on the Cyprus payment only; —that any kind of guarantee involving English revenues could, of course, only be taken with the assent of Parliament,—and that, in the then mood of a section of the House of Commons, it was simply impracticable to deal with such a question during the last fortnight or ten days of the session already devoted beforehand to indispensable business. But I feel that in some form or other we shall have to make an effort to set the credit of the Porte upright again, and I will keep the matter constantly before me."

A private telegram sent almost immediately afterwards qualified the discouragement of this letter. "Do not at present state positively we cannot help Sultan about money. I am not very sanguine but we may perhaps be able to effect something, though not quite immediately." (*August 21.*) The suggested hope is explained by a letter written to Sir Stafford Northcote the following day. Its occasion was somewhat similar to that which had produced Lord Salisbury's first proposal. The Eastern Telegraph Company had asked for support in an application to purchase from the Turkish Government their telegraph line across Asia Minor. Sir Stafford had been advised by a certain Major Champain—an officer in the Indian service—to refuse the request on the ground that, for political reasons, the line ought to be acquired and worked by the British Government itself. He wished to know his colleague's views upon the point. The proposal with which Lord Salisbury replied was in part conditioned by the imminence at that moment of a rupture between Greece and Turkey. Greece had been awarded a "rectification of frontier" under the Berlin Treaty, the detailed delimitation of which was to be

negotiated directly between her and Turkey. The latter had refused to enter upon the negotiation and Greece was now threatening to assert her claims by force of arms. Her cause had the sympathy of a large majority in the House of Commons, including many of those who, as against the Russians, had been Turcophil in their sympathies. It would have been utterly useless, as Lord Salisbury pointed out later to Sir Henry Layard, to ask them to give financial support to Turkey as long as there was any chance of the money being spent upon fighting Greece.

To Sir Stafford Northcote, August 22, 1878.

"On the whole I agree with Major Champain. I think his supremacy will do more than Pender's to promote that pacific invasion of Englishmen which is our principal reliance for the purpose of getting power over the country.

"But if you decide in favour of Champain, how do you mean to do it? A working agreement will in no degree tempt the Turks: why should they wish the telegraph to work better? They will probably refuse, or interpose endless delays. Our position at the Porte only differs from that which we used to hold in that we seem to be rather readier to fight than we used to be. But our influence on each occasion will simply depend on appeals to hopes and fears. What have you to offer—or to threaten—will be the implied question every time Layard climbs up to the Porte with a request. In the present case there is no room for threats, so the question is simplified. Why should the Turk turn out good Turks from the management of his telegraph offices for the purpose of substituting unclean infidels? What is it to him that your messages will go in an intelligible form? If, indeed, you were inclined to buy the telegraph line with a good round sum of

money, of which just now he is grievously in want; or to take it as a consideration for putting the name of England on the back of some new Turkish appeal to the confidence of Europe—it would be another matter. But to this complexion most of our requests to the Turk must come at last.

"I offered you the draft of a financial treaty some three weeks back, but you would have none of it. Nothing daunted, I offer you another to digest during your tour in the Highlands. Like a kind of inverted Sybil, the more you refuse, the more I ask:

"1. England lends to Turkey *x* million—say 8—at 3 per cent, repayable by sinking fund in 30 years; which is agreed to come to 5 per cent.

"2. In return, Turkey (*a*) accepts reforms proposed in our despatch: (*b*) hands over to an officer named by England collection of all revenues in Asiatic Turkey (you may exclude Southern Syria to please France) till loan is repaid: said officer having appointment of all revenue officers under him: (*c*) comes to terms with Greece about rectification: (*d*) gives telegraph line to England.

"3. England undertakes to apply money received in the following order: (*a*) payment of 5 per cent on the 8 millions: (*b*) expenses of Government in Asiatic Turkey; including nothing military except what is necessary for order: (*c*) 2 per cent on nominal value of all Ottoman debts, including Russian indemnity. If receipts insufficient (which for some time they will be) the 2 per cent is to be paid in order of chronological priority. (*d*) Residue, if any, to Constantinople.

"4. Cyprus 'tribute' to pay balance of guaranteed loan of 1855 to England and France; and a more intelligible agreement about Crown Lands to be signed.

"5. In consideration of rectification of Greek frontier, France and England to agree to restrain Greece from attacking Turkey for 30 years.

"I commend the above to your thoughts. A

November session would be necessary if it were agreed upon, as it could only be negotiated while the present stress of misery is on the Turks, and while Russia is still disorganised. The principle of it is to offer—1. Money to Turkey and peace with Greece. 2. Some chance of indemnity to Russia. 3. Something to the creditors. 4. Greek rectification to the House of Commons. 5. Reforms to the Asiatic population. I hope soon to work out the figures for you more closely.

"Whenever a railway or other undertaking has come to grief, it has always been found necessary to raise a certain sum of money in the first instance to restore its money-earning power. It is the same with a bankrupt State."

In its political aspect this proposal did not err on the side of timidity. The collection of the entire revenue of the country by British officers and the control of its application to "expenses of government" would have placed England in much the same position in Armenia, Mesopotamia and Northern Syria as she was subsequently destined to occupy in Egypt. Sir Stafford's financial orthodoxy did not by any means exclude political imagination. Though he admitted that "the great scheme," as he called it, "rather took his breath away," he did not, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, reject it. (*August 24.*) But as leader of the House of Commons he strongly demurred to a November session, and did not believe that the Prime Minister would ever agree to it. Besides, his colleague was altogether too much in a hurry. The negotiations would take time,—the full financial position of Turkey under new conditions must be examined,—the Treasury must hammer out details. He himself, before setting out to persuade the House of Commons to take over the whole financial management of Asia Minor, must be pre-

pared by an exhaustive study of the subject. Two months would evidently not suffice for all this. Lord Salisbury's comment on this answer, written from Puys, whither he had gone for a brief and interrupted holiday, conveyed already a premonition of failure. "As to the great scheme—I hardly expected that you would accept the November session. But I fear that by February the time will have passed by. . . . However, I fear the delay is inevitable and we must pull through as best we can." (*August 27.*)

Scattered allusions to the subject appear in other letters. In September he saw Lord Beaconsfield at Hughenden and reported that, on the question of Turkish finance, the Prime Minister "did not see his way to any immediate help." (*September 23.*) On the other hand, M. Waddington, whom he had met in Paris a few days earlier and to whom he had "explained what we meant to do in Asia," assured him that France had no claims there and would support him in any policy of reform that he might pursue.[1] Considering her habitual championship of creditors' rights, one must assume that the explanation did not extend to financial detail. In October his purpose still held. He communicated the headings of the scheme to Sir Henry Layard as of one "that had not been altogether rejected by the Exchequer." (*October 10.*) That was just after his final return from his holiday in France and it is the last direct reference to "the great scheme" to be found in his correspondence. Its fate became merged in a forced abandonment of all plans for raising money for the Ottoman Empire upon the credit of England. The mere rumour that the creation of such a preferential claim upon the Turkish revenues was in contemplation

[1] To Sir H. Layard, October 29, reporting a conversation which he had had with M. Waddington in September.

roused the cosmopolitan army of bond-holding creditors to protest. Its English members sent a representative to convey their indignation to the Foreign Office, and more potent remonstrances came from the Quai d'Orsay. Had he been supported by Parliament or public opinion at home, it is possible that Lord Salisbury might have overruled this opposition and compelled such an acceptance of lessened interest with security as was obtained from the Egyptian bondholders a year later. But the stars in their courses were fighting against him. Parliament was, after all, summoned to a November session ;—but it was in order to vote credits to meet a sudden outbreak of war in Afghanistan. A period of severe depression had coincidently set in, both in trade and agriculture ; the revenue was rapidly falling, unemployment and distress were rife, and the House of Commons had become even more recalcitrant than the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself to further calls upon the national purse. In December Ministers put forward as an experiment a suggestion for making a small grant to assist the Moslem refugees who had fled from the districts in Russian occupation and were suffering acute distress which their own Government was powerless to relieve. Lord Salisbury reports the result and with it the final extinction of all hopes of controlling the Sultan through an appeal to his impecuniosity :

To Sir Henry Layard, December 18, 1878.

" We put out a pilot balloon on Friday last in order to see how far there was any disposition on the part of the House of Commons to help the Turks. The result was eminently discouraging. That our opponents were prepared to oppose it did not, of course, admit of a doubt. But a most violent out-

break of discontent seized upon our own friends. By Saturday evening we had pretty well arrived at the conviction that no one would *willingly* vote for any grant, small or large, to the Rhodope sufferers except the Cabinet,—and that only a very small minority could have been induced to vote for it at all. The incident is unpleasant but instructive. It puts an end, I fear, to all financial schemes which involve any notable sacrifice, or risk of sacrifice, of money on the part of the British Government. If the Turks are to get a loan, it must be in some other fashion. To any other ambassador I might have to prove in detail that the House of Commons, especially on a question of money, will have its way. But you will not need to be told that it is a far easier matter to induce the Czar to give up his policy than the House of Commons to give up its whims." [1]

It is interesting to remember that the majority which thus frankly mutinied rather than vote a few thousands for a purpose favoured by Government but of whose necessity it was not convinced,—the same majority which had kept its leaders on tenter-hooks over a question of diplomatic detail like that of Batoum in which England had no direct interest,—was generally accused at the time of a quite peculiar servility to Ministers. Standards have altered since then,—and parliamentary " whims " have lost their compelling quality !

If Lord Salisbury had dreamed dreams, he had not lost hold on actuality or, in the search for more effectual powers, ceased to urge a full use of those already available. Writing just after his return from Berlin, he had dwelt upon the new responsibilities which the ambassador would now have to face.

[1] Sir Henry Layard had been a member of the House of Commons in 1852–57 and again in 1860–69.

His position must henceforth be one of constant struggle : " He will be in the front of the battle for the interests both of England and humanity in the East." (*July 24.*) In September he was congratulating him on the ground already won and postulating a fundamental condition of future success.

To Sir Henry Layard, September 18, 1878.

" The upshot of the labours of the last year and a half has been, besides the Anglo-Turkish Convention, a very considerable increase in the authority and influence of Great Britain at Constantinople. And this, so long as the Turkish Empire endures, is one of the most important objects of English policy,—perhaps the most vital of all. It will have to be maintained, as it has been achieved, by constant labour and vigilance on the part of the ambassador."

His letters were mainly devoted to a stimulating support of the exertions for which he called. Arguments, exhortations, warnings, for transmission to the Sultan and his Ministers went out by nearly every mail, — accompanied as time went on by sympathetic denunciations of the obstruction with which his correspondent had to deal. The Porte's answer to the despatch of August 8—incessantly demanded—was not forthcoming till the end of October. It followed upon a menacing message from the Foreign Secretary, to which point was given by an acrimonious dispute with Austria over the Bosnian occupation in which Turkey was at that moment engaged : " The reluctance of England to enter on a full policy of partition will not bear more than a certain amount of strain,—and that reluctance is the solitary support on which the Sultan's Empire now rests." (*October 17.*)

In the answer which this pressure produced, the Turkish Government pledged itself to a scheme of reforms which, though less drastic than what had been asked for, would, in Lord Salisbury's opinion, have been adequate if carried into effect. There was little chance, however, of that being done spontaneously, and, early in the ensuing year, he initiated machinery for enlarging the opportunity for British interference. A number of military officers, having previous experience among eastern peoples, were appointed as special consuls in Asiatic Turkey, charged with the sole duty of superintending the performance of the Sultan's promises. They were to visit all parts of the districts assigned to them, enquire into complaints, remonstrate against abuses, urge action upon local officials, report regularly to Constantinople and London. In those days of rigid financial control it was not easy to obtain Treasury consent to even so small an addition to departmental expenditure, and Lord Salisbury sent a private appeal to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his support in this experiment.

To Sir Stafford Northcote, February 2, 1879.

"Please take the enclosed into your early consideration. I should like to know what you think of it before forwarding it to the Treasury formally. The reports of Captain Trotter, Mr. Henderson and of Mr. Malet, the Secretary of Embassy, whom we sent on alone through Asia Minor, are appalling. They give a picture of a society from which order and justice seem almost to have disappeared. I do not think we should be justified in abstaining any longer from bringing such relief as the presence of good consular agents may afford. Some such step is, I think, also necessary as an earnest of our intention not to allow the Asiatic reforms to drop. As you will see, we have

laboured hard to meet the expense by cutting down elsewhere ; but a balance of £2000 remains for which we must ask your authority."

Corruption and incapacity rather than active tyranny were the defects mainly charged at that time against the Turkish administration. During and since the war large tracts of the country had been abandoned to anarchy. Bands of Kurdish and Arab brigands were exercising, unchecked, every form of oppression upon the peaceful inhabitants, both Moslem and Christian. In Anatolia a destitution amounting in some districts to famine was being aggravated by the continuous arrival of refugees from the provinces surrendered to Russia,—a starving multitude for whom no provision whatever had been made. At the time of the Russian invasion, Armenians had not made matters easier by scattered attempts to retaliate ancient injuries and by boasting of a coming autonomy which would reduce their Mahommedan fellow-villagers to subjection. These were now retorting by widespread reprisals of individual violence and oppression. In all this welter of disorder and misery, authority and law were represented only by a bureaucracy which was constitutionally apathetic, inevitably partisan, and permeated by a corruption so shameless as to shock even witnesses who were familiar with ordinary Oriental standards.

As the summer advanced, the new consuls' reports began to come in. They were voluminous and depressing. Sir Henry urged their complaints and requirements on the Porte with unwearying reiteration. Something was achieved. A certain number of individual grievances were redressed, and in several of the provinces relatively honest and energetic governors were appointed. But the English observers

were not hopeful. Between resistance from below and lack of support from above, even the best intentioned governor could do little. The fundamental evil lay in Constantinople itself.

There the struggle was incessant. Exhortations to patience and perseverance form the groundwork of Lord Salisbury's letters to his ambassador, with occasional bursts of exasperation and despairing prophecy of evil to come. A constant assumption is noticeable that failure to accept reform will at once merge, without any break of continuity, into the catastrophe of Ottoman dissolution. The consuls' reports spoke, in fact, of closely impending insurrection both on the part of Arabs and Armenians. If the Turk did not mend his ways it might break out at any moment. Perhaps if their own activities had not been interrupted their predictions would have been verified. There was probably solid ground from his own point of view for the Sultan's objection to intrusive Europeans ;—their presence had in itself a disintegrating effect upon the submissiveness of his subjects. His pledge to employ them in the higher administrative posts was pertinaciously evaded, and, in November, Lord Salisbury's remonstrances again became minatory. He reminded Musurus Pasha, the ambassador in London, of his own disregarded warnings at the time of the Constantinople Conference and of the event which had followed, and told him "that whether England took an attitude hostile to the Porte or not must depend on whether immediate measures were or were not taken to fulfil the promises that had been made." (*November 6, 1879.*) He had been for some time concentrating his efforts upon obtaining an instalment of the promised appointments in the person of General Valentine Baker, who was already serving in the Turkish Army.

To Sir Henry Layard, November 6, 1879.

"The prospect is not bright. The character of the Sultan appears likely to be the doom of his race. But there is no course left for us but "pegging away," and to use every means of influence we have to procure, as the first step, the appointment of a European officer — Baker if possible — with an independent command of Gendarmerie. . . . If the Sultan stands out, we must be prepared for great events. Our action may not go further than demonstrations to establish that our responsibility for Turkey is at an end. But it will not be from us that the fatal blow will come. Unless everybody, English and Turkish, is in a conspiracy of illusion, the present Palace system will not be indefinitely submitted to by the Asiatic populations. But if they rebel—what next? It will be a fearful confusion, involving certainly Arabia, probably Persia in the ruin. Since the collapse of the Western Empire, I doubt whether history has presented any case of such complete confusion over so large a region of country. It is worth while exhausting every source of argument and menace to avert such a catastrophe."

The very probability of such a calamity was a hamper. A week later he was confessing that the only way that he could see at present of giving effect to his threats was to make such a demonstration as would raise a revolution. "To do that for the purpose of producing order and good government is rather like burning down a house to procure roast pork." (*November 13.*) However, on this occasion, the threat of British abandonment and possible hostility proved effective and the Sultan surrendered —with reservations. Baker Pasha was appointed Inspector-General of Reforms in Asia Minor—but received instructions later which left him without the executive authority that had been hoped for.

The episode was typical in the sequence of its stages. Obstruction,—remonstrance,—threats,—compliance,—followed by evasion of the fresh engagements taken, and so back to the beginning. Opinions differed as to the residuum of permanent advance which survived, but to all concerned the process was an exasperating trial of patience. That of the chief's endured better than his subordinate's, and during that winter he had more than once to preach economy in objurgation to his erstwhile Turcophil ambassador. "I am afraid," he writes to Lord Odo, "that he has lost his temper with the Sultan, and like a Portuguese sailor in a storm is disposed to beat the idol he worshipped." (*December 31, 1879.*)

But with the new year he was apparently himself contemplating the necessity of some fresh departure. Writing on January 8, 1880, after urging that there was danger of losing influence if our communications were made too constantly disagreeable, and advising that menace should be for the present avoided, he adds that the time for it might come again and that it might be soon: "But the next step we take in that direction will be a serious one." In the same letter he discusses what constitutional change would be necessary to avert catastrophe. It need only be slight in form. "A small Council of State, nominated for life, exempt from exile, and possessing a veto on all provincial nominations and dismissals, would suffice. By giving greater stability to the Valis it would produce a self-acting decentralisation, and if the Council were well chosen and not too large, good appointments would be the result." He had no wish to give it control over legislation or over the Sultan's choice of Ministers. "Responsible government is a contrivance established by tacit agreement and usage,—not by written law. It would be impossible to

draw the clauses of a decree which should set it up." To prepare for the growth of stable and well-ordered, but not westernised, local administrations was the object aimed at. The idea was to hasten and give peaceable and orderly direction to the ordinary centrifugal process by which new communities have so often been evolved from the decaying empires of the East.

But such fundamental developments must await future opportunities;—he confesses at the close of this letter that he sees no present prospect of securing them. Other parts of his correspondence show that, though scarcely sanguine, he did not despair, even as things were, of achieving some more immediate betterment of conditions. His attitude in that respect is presented in letters addressed to the two principal officers in the new hierarchy,—Major Trotter, Consul-General in Kurdistan, and Colonel Wilson, occupying the same position in Anatolia. They were written at three months' interval, and the later one shows an appreciable increase in hopefulness.

To Major Trotter, September 16, 1879.

"I have been prevented by the accumulation of business from writing before as I should have done, to thank you for the very striking and interesting reports you have sent us with respect to the state of things in Kurdistan and other parts of Asia Minor. The evils you depict are terrible and the prospect of a remedy is not near. The majority of the population being Mussulman, Armenian 'autonomy' is impossible, and if the Armenians are at all like the Bulgarians, the remedy if possible would be worse than the disease. A cure would at once be found if there were a capable Government at Constantinople. But the Sultan's feebleness of character puts that hope out of the question, and if he were dethroned,

or if he were to die, his next heir is said to be imbecile. Even if he were an able man, it is doubtful if he could find ministers of energy among the class by which he is surrounded. There is therefore little to hope for from Constantinople. Whatever chance of amelioration there is lies more in your vigilance and importunity, and in that of the other Consuls, than in any prospect of external assistance. Sir H. Layard speaks hopefully of obtaining the appointment of General Baker to a high military post in Kurdistan. Of the advantage of such a selection there can be no question, but I feel very little confidence in its being effected. . . . We have no means of compelling the Turks to take this measure if they are disinclined to it. We cannot well go to war with them, and they are so accustomed to mere threats that they are perfectly callous to them.

"The diplomacy, therefore, of the Consuls in Asia Minor is really all to which at present these wretchedly ill-governed populations have to look. But this consideration will not, and ought not to, make you look upon your task as desperate. Where you cannot apply material force, there is a great deal to be accomplished by mere personal ascendancy in dealing with an Oriental, as our experience in India has frequently testified. Even now I think the results of your exertions may be traced, and the traces will become more and more distinct."

To Colonel Wilson, December 4, 1879.

"I am afraid from the letters of yours which I have seen that you are taking a desponding view of your work. That you should do so is perfectly natural, for the pile of abuses which stand in the way of any return of happiness to these unlucky countries naturally impresses you who see it every day very much more painfully than us who only read of it; and while so much remains to be done, you may naturally feel that no progress is made. But I

cannot think that your feeling is really justified by the facts. This is the first serious attempt to cure misgovernment which has endured for centuries, and which during the last two generations has grown with accelerating speed. In the nature of things the process must be very, very slow. It would be slow if we had nothing to contend against except the *vis inertia* of the iniquity itself. But the possibility of success is viewed with alarm by the fanatics of a dominant creed whom it would displace, and by rival Powers who have too many means of thwarting us on the Bosphorus. That under these circumstances we have moved a step is to me a matter of great wonder. The appointments of Midhat, Said, Rustem, and Abedin are really great steps gained. The full value of their nomination will not be felt until the present extreme destitution of the Porte has passed away,—as pass away it must unless the whole machine collapses. But even now it seems to me, studying reports, that there has been a sensible abatement of human suffering. Matters of course would be better and our plans would roll much more swiftly if we were as much masters in Asia Minor as we are in the Punjaub, but we are not and are not likely to be in that position. There are too many great Powers who have an interest in baulking any scheme of general employment of Englishmen in the administration to leave us the slightest hope that such an issue will ever be reached. And a general employment of Europeans of all nations would, I fear, mean one of those international Governments which are worse than Turkish misrule. In the absence of any drastic and effective mode of proceeding, we must patiently try what the long dropping of remonstrance and reproach and the contagion of European public opinion will have upon the Palace first, and afterwards on the ruling class. Occasional threats may be used but it must be done sparingly, on pain of blunting the weapon altogether.

"I hope you do not think we publish too freely. I know the difficulties to which incaution in that

respect may expose you. But the Blue Book is one of your most powerful agencies . . . I should be sorry to abandon the practice of printing your vigorous portraiture of the abuses you see before you—because I feel certain that in a number of imperceptible ways, the indignation which it creates forces its way even to the Imperial ears. Also, it must be remembered, that we have a timid Sultan to deal with, and every roll of distant European censure that he hears reminds him how the displeasure of Europe ended in the case of Ismail Pasha.[1] I believe the Ambassador will do his utmost to give effect to your representations—and I hope you will not abate the vigour with which you have hitherto exposed abuses.

"It is impossible to augur at present how much will come of Baker's appointment; but if it does not influence the Sultan directly, it will so arouse the suffering classes as to make it difficult for him to remain deaf."

"The process must be very, very slow." Four months after this letter was written Lord Beaconsfield's Ministry was displaced by one already pledged to regard the Convention as an offence against public morality and to disown that conditional support of the Sultan's Government upon which rested the only hope of influencing its actions. Sir Henry Layard retired almost immediately from an impossible position, and the withdrawal of the military consuls, two years later, only recognised a failure which had become inevitable. A veil fell between Europe and those unhappy regions, penetrated from time to time by news of successive Kurdish raids and of disorder helplessly acquiesced in. For years the patience of the Oriental belied the forecasts of Western observers until, in 1895, rumours of Armenian unrest and conspiracy became rife, to be followed by the first

[1] The Khedive Ismail of Egypt, whose abdication had been compelled by France and England six months previously.

outbreak of that bloodthirsty panic at the seat of government which for more than twenty years was to express itself in recurrent spasms of massacre.

This tragedy of an Empire in decay was not the only phenomenon which marked the history of those years. In the matter of foreign influence at the Porte the mutually destructive policies at Westminster reacted at first to a complete clearance. Russia had been successfully excluded,—England had voluntarily withdrawn. When the time came for German commercial enterprise to invade the Near East, it found the field clear for all those perilous political ambitions by which it was accompanied and directed.

One can only hazard guesses as to how far the policy initiated in 1878 would have succeeded had it been suffered to survive. Lord Salisbury's letters show no confident anticipation, but they do not admit defeat. The presence of the consuls and the close touch which his correspondence with them established between the disorders of these misgoverned countries and his own instinct for action must have ensured in the future, as it had done in the past, a continuous activity of interference on his part. It would have been effective for results in proportion to the power which he was able to command at Constantinople. All depended upon that. The establishment and increase of British influence there must remain, according to his own statement, the "most vital" object of his policy so long as Turkish rule endured. How far he could have secured it in the teeth of international rivalries and of that mingling of corrupt decadence with undiminished pride of race which characterised the ruling class in Turkey it is impossible to say. All that is certain is that the elections of 1880 were decisive of its destruction and, with it, of defeat for

all that he had worked for in Asia Minor. When, five years later, he went back to the Foreign Office, one of his earliest enquiries of its documents was as to the actual condition of our influence at Constantinople. He returned from the investigation in despair. "They have just thrown it away into the sea," he exclaimed, "without getting anything whatever in exchange."

CHAPTER IX

1878–1880

POST-CONGRESS EUROPE

EGYPT AND AFGHANISTAN

European diplomacy did not find rest from the Eastern Question with the conclusion of the Berlin Treaty. Its provisions had to be carried into effect. Except as regarded the claims of Greece and one or two minor points of delimitation, the process was completed within thirteen months of the close of the Congress,—a result, however, only achieved by continuous pressure upon both the late belligerent powers.

The settlement gratified neither, and each, after its own fashion, did its best to evade execution. Though Russia had actually secured all that she had proclaimed to be her objects in declaring war, she had been forced to abandon the far larger advantage which she had intermediately won and for which she had paid so heavily in blood and treasure. Her public press protested indignantly at Europe's decision, and its dissatisfaction was not lessened by reports of the simultaneous jubilation in England. Lord Salisbury had a first experience in the evils of "trumpeting" a diplomatic victory upon which he used so often to insist later. "It is one of the misfortunes of telegraphic communications," he complains to

Lord Odo soon after his return home, "that no Treaty of Peace can ever be generally popular, because, directly that A knows that B is pleased, he thinks that B is likely to be the best judge and he is proportionately displeased." [1]

It was not only the newspapers in Russia that were mortified by the event. The Czar showed his feelings by gradually re-instating the Pan-Slavist party in favour. Some of its more violent members already occupied posts of authority in the occupying army and upon the International Boards which were engaged in delimitating frontiers and organising administration in the new provinces. These took every occasion to proclaim their intention of stultifying the decisions of Congress and, above all, of indefinitely postponing the evacuation of the peninsula.

Their way was made easier by the futile and indiscriminate obstruction which Turkey offered to every item of the Treaty to which she had subscribed. It was a course of policy by which, in Bosnia, she added Austria and Germany to her enemies and, in Greece, alienated the sympathies of France. The burden of worrying her into submission fell mainly upon England as the Power having most authority at Constantinople. Lord Salisbury's activities during the next twelve months were alternately occupied in restraining the impatience of the Central Powers without irritating them into a resumption of the Three Emperors' Alliance;—resisting Pan-Slavist schemes while conciliating support from the Czar's saner counsellors;—inducing a modicum of common sense at Constantinople without imperilling influence sorely needed for his enterprise in Asia Minor;—and concentrating these different lines of action upon the primary object of securing a punctual evacuation of the Russian

[1] July 28, 1878.

troops and thus bringing the dangerous transition period to a close.

There were other subjects competing for his time. It was not only at its centre that the process of decay in the Ottoman Empire had become a danger to peace and an obsession to diplomacy. In Egypt it had reached a separate and advanced stage. Though the Khedive Ismail was still trying to assert his independent right to oppress his peasantry and cheat his creditors, the claim of foreign Governments to interfere in the management of his finances had already, two years before this date, been successfully asserted. A machinery of International Boards was at work, controlled, with the consent of the rest of Europe, by the Governments of England and France. The two Powers were acting informally together, watchfully jealous at every stage of each other's advance in influence. It was an inevitable rivalry. Egypt's commercial interests were centred in the Mediterranean and her main dependence had been for generations upon the leading Mediterranean Power. On the other hand, she stood at the gateway of Asia and—especially since the opening of the Canal—dominated England's approach to her Indian possessions. The mastery fell in the end to the most exclusive need ;—France's maritime and commercial energies could find an outlet in Tunis, Morocco, Syria,—England could find no other road to India than that which led past Egypt. From his first occupation with the question, Lord Salisbury seems to have had no doubt as to what must be its ultimate issue, and at the outset was prepared actively to promote it.

When he took over the Foreign Office in April, the payment of a half-yearly interest on the Public Debt of Egypt was about to become due. The Commissioners of the Debt—supported by Mr. Vivian, the

British Consul-General at Cairo — were anxious to allow its postponement in view of the country's manifest inability to meet it. The French Government, on the other hand, were insisting that the claims of the creditors should be satisfied, and Lord Salisbury —in contradiction to his later and more sustained policy—decided to support them in this demand. He wrote to explain his action to Mr. Vivian. The mention in this letter of an "Inspector-General" seems to have referred to a general proposition for supplementing the existing financial by some form of administrative control and not to any appointment actually suggested.

To Mr. Vivian, May 3, 1878.

"It is clear that, unless the Khedive's administration is put under some restraint, he will go on oppressing his subjects more and more—but will also defraud his creditors more and more. This Inspector-General, having entire power over the levy of taxation, and also having power over the inferior Courts of Justice so as to protect the peasantry in his rights, will shortly be a necessity. But it will be an unpleasant necessity both for the Khedive and the French: for the Khedive because it will be the close of his day of personal power; for the French because it will be the commencement of English predominance in Egypt. Both these resistances must be encountered, and I trust overcome, but the task will be extremely formidable. It is therefore of high importance to diminish these resistances to the utmost possible point, before we take the step which will rouse them into action."

The Khedive could be induced to genuine acceptance only by despair. If he was allowed to think that by working upon the humanity of the English he could, under cover of tenderness to his peasantry,

defy the demands of France and his creditors, he would take his bankruptcy easily and laugh at suggestions of reform. And, on the other hand, the only motive which would reconcile France to our supremacy would be the belief that, without our intervention, the interest would not be paid, and that with it, it would be.

"I have entered into these details in order to explain why I have wished that in the matter of paying his debts the Khedive should be kept well up in the collar. If it forces him to accept an administrator as a cure for his financial and economic ills, it will be better in the long run for himself, better for the public creditors, better for the fellaheen."

A single British administrator and the early establishment of British predominance in the country is here assumed. But a short experience as to actual conditions, and particularly as to the state of French feeling upon the subject, induced in Lord Salisbury an abandonment of this expectation. His projects with regard to Asia Minor no doubt contributed to the same conclusion, and by the time the Congress met, he had accepted the policy of "parity of influence" to which he adhered during the remainder of his term of office,—though never, apparently, with any confidence as to its permanence. Three years later, in a letter to Sir Stafford Northcote, he summarised retrospectively the reasoning which had led him to this decision.

To Sir Stafford Northcote, September 16, 1881.

"As to our policy—the defence of it lies in a nutshell. When you have got a neighbour and faithful ally who is bent on meddling in a country in which you are deeply interested—you have three courses open to you. You may renounce — or

monopolise—or share. Renouncing would have been to place the French across our road to India. Monopolising would have been very near the risk of war. So we resolved to share."

The question occupied a prominent place in the conversations which he had with M. Waddington in Berlin,—in which the futures of Tunis and Asia Minor were also discussed. Inaccurate reports of these conversations became current at Constantinople and, some months later, he wrote a brief account of them to his ambassador there.

To Sir Henry Layard, October 29, 1878.

" What happened was this :—In the course of our intercourse at Berlin, which was necessarily familiar, Waddington and I often discussed the events which were taking place in the Mediterranean and their effect on the balance of power in the European States. While I maintained our right to a dominant influence in Western Asia and especially in Mesopotamia, I disclaimed any intention of establishing an exclusive footing in Egypt ; and with respect to Tunis, I said that England was wholly disinterested and had no intention to contest the influence which the geographical position of Algeria naturally gave to France. Lord Beaconsfield held similar language to him. Sometimes also we discussed the possibility of the Turkish Empire going entirely to pieces. In that case, I told him, he must not hold us bound to any promise as to Egypt ; but that, as to Tunis, England would not hold herself bound to interfere with any course which France in such an event might choose to take."

After the Congress the French Foreign Minister asked that the substance of these informal negotiations should be placed on record in a despatch. Lord

Salisbury agreed, but was careful to limit his future commitments.

To Lord Lyons, July 20, 1878.

"The subjects to which he has called your attention, as he did ours at Berlin, are difficult to make the subject of binding assurances, because the contingencies under which these assurances would receive a practical application are difficult to foresee. If France occupied Tunis to-morrow, we should not even remonstrate. But to promise that publicly would be a little difficult, because we must avoid giving away other people's property without their consent, and also because it is no business of ours to pronounce beforehand on the considerations which Italy would probably advance upon that subject. In the same way as to Egypt. We have stated distinctly, more than once, that we do not entertain any intention of occupying it, and that statement we are perfectly willing to renew. But, having done that, and having expressed our anxiety to work with France in Egypt, we have said as much as would be seemly or possible. We can hardly pledge the Khedive as to what he means to do without in reality assuming a voice in his concerns which we do not according to any international right possess."

His wish to avoid interference, wherever possible, was recurrently apparent from this time forward, and was no doubt largely the outcome of his decision to go hand in hand with France. More than once he impresses upon his agents the opportunities for quarrelling between the partners which any active intervention must produce. But the Khedive's government was sliding downhill, and, without any wish of their own, the grip of the two Powers inevitably tightened as the momentum of the descent increased. August saw another stage in the process.

An international Commission of Enquiry into the financial position had been appointed in the spring, at the demand of the Commissioners of the Debt, with wide general powers of recommendation. It made an interim report in the first week of that month. The bankrupt condition of the country was emphasised, the Khedive's personal rule was arraigned as the fundamental cause of evil, and he was called upon to govern henceforth through a responsible Ministry. After a slight hesitation he consented, and appointed Nubar Pasha, an able Armenian of enlightened views, as Prime Minister. Nubar Pasha at once asked that Mr. Rivers Wilson, a British Treasury official who had been lent for service on the Commission of Enquiry, might be allowed to join his Cabinet as Finance Minister. After some weeks' delay he extended a similar invitation for a Frenchman to become Minister for Public Works. During the interval Lord Salisbury had an interview with M. Waddington in Paris.

To Lord Beaconsfield, September 5, 1878.

" Waddington pressed me strongly to call on him, so I went yesterday morning and had nearly an hour and a half of it. . . . The matter on which I think he was most anxious was that we should put into an obligatory shape the parity of influence between England and France in Egypt. He first proposed that I should put into the form of a Convention the assurances which I had given him with respect to Egypt in our despatch. I said that I thought such a proposal would be inadmissible on the ground that it was too plain-spoken a claim to make the Khedive the vassal of England and France. It does not seem to me expedient to bind ourselves formally in this matter. As matters now stand, we have no choice but to admit in some sort a parity of influence between

England and France. But the state of affairs may change and it may suit us at some future period to push ahead; and then any obligatory engagement would be highly inconvenient.

"He was also anxious—though he did not formulate an exact request—that we should undertake the duty of forcing the Egyptian Government to appoint to the Cabinet a Frenchman on the principle, as he expressed it, of 'share and share alike.' . . . I agreed to suspend our consent to Rivers Wilson's appointment for a short time, to enable France to ask for such a nomination, if it should not have been spontaneously offered. But I gave no encouragement to the idea that we would make the application for him."

On the general question, some remarks addressed to Mr. Goschen—who, as the accredited representative of the British bondholders, was in constant communication with both Governments—probably best expressed his innermost mind at this time.

To Lord Lyons, August 10, 1878.

"I told Goschen that we were very anxious to work with the French, and that we intend to take no violent means of placing ourselves in a position which would make them subordinate. But I told him I nevertheless had faith in the English influence in Egypt drawing ahead; a result which in my belief depended, not on any formal acts, but on the natural superiority which a good Englishman in such a position was pretty sure to show."

Though the session had begun three weeks earlier than usual and its legislative output had been small, the House of Commons had spent so much time in debating unsuccessful votes of censure upon the Government's foreign policy that it was not until the middle of August that Lord Salisbury was able to

get away to his holiday in France. Holidays, so long as he was Foreign Minister, were a somewhat conventional term,—representing, indeed, only a comparative freedom from personal interviews. It was not absolute ;—statesmen and diplomatists, anxious to enforce their views conversationally, found Dieppe easily accessible both from London and Paris. And in other respects the diminution of labour was very slight. Messengers, loaded with piled-up Foreign Office boxes, crossed the Channel in both directions two or three times a week, and the official in charge of the coast-guard station, a mile along the cliff, soon became familiar with the system of code telegraphing in use in her Britannic Majesty's service.

This year, even the qualified holiday was not enjoyed without interruption. In the first days of September Lord Salisbury was summoned back to London,—stopping at Paris on the way for that conversation with M. Waddington over Egypt. The occasion was an outburst of exasperation on the part of the German Chancellor with the Sultan for his encouragement of Moslem resistance to the Treaty in Bosnia and Albania. He wanted the Powers to join in an identic note of remonstrance. It was early days for such a display of international impatience ; Lord Beaconsfield was indignant and Lord Salisbury suspected Russian inspiration. He told the German representative in London that he could not join and the project was abandoned But he discovered that it had originated, not with Russia, but with Austria, and a fortnight later when there was talk of its resumption, he wrote to the Queen and Lord Beaconsfield questioning whether a too persistent opposition might not risk a renewal of Imperial intrigue and a return to the dangerous position of the previous spring.

To Lord Beaconsfield, September 18, 1878.

"My apprehension is that Andrassy, hard pressed by the Slav party, is supremely anxious for a demonstration of sympathy from England, and of docility from the Porte. If he does not get it, can he be depended on? I well remember his talking at Berlin about his overtures to Granville, and afterwards Derby—and his inability to obtain any co-operation, or hope of it, from them. 'I could not remain in the air,' was the moral with which he pointed his tale. He never does remain 'in the air,' and Schouvaloff's presence at Vienna seems to indicate that the moment has come, in some people's opinion, for illustrating that truth."

The Prime Minister protested against any return upon the decision taken; but the difference between the colleagues—the only one recorded during Lord Salisbury's tenure of the Foreign Office—never came to an issue, since the proposition was not in fact renewed. Meanwhile, unexpected news from India had made Lord Salisbury's brief return to England the opportunity for consultation upon a question of more urgent importance.

Towards the end of July information had reached the India Office that a Russian mission had arrived some weeks before at Cabul and was being entertained with all honour at the Amir's Court. In view of his persistent refusal to receive a British envoy, this could only be regarded as a demonstration of hostility, and the Cabinet decided that he must at once be required to receive a similar embassage from Calcutta. A letter was sent to him announcing this decision and inviting a friendly reception for the envoy. It was accompanied by another letter conveying the Viceroy's condolences upon the recent death of one of his sons,—an act of ceremonial courtesy, which,

according to the laws of Oriental etiquette, required immediate acknowledgment. No notice was taken of either letter and, on September 8, the Calcutta Government telegraphed home that, without waiting longer, they proposed at once to despatch the selected envoy, Sir Neville Chamberlain, with an escort of 1000 men through the Khyber Pass on his way to Cabul.

"Lytton's telegram has gone to you to-night and will give you matter to sleep and dream over," wrote Lord Salisbury to his chief on the 9th from London, and on the 10th he went down to dine and sleep and talk foreign—and more particularly Indian frontier policy—at Hughenden. The proposal telegraphed involved war as the immediate alternative to surrender, and the two colleagues demurred. Lord Cranbrook was in Scotland and there was need for quick action if the issue was not to be prejudged. In accord no doubt with his chief, Lord Salisbury, on his return to London the next day, took the initiative.

To Lord Beaconsfield, September 11, 1878.

"The information which reaches me is that Cranbrook's views are inclined to be bellicose with respect to Afghanistan.

"In order, therefore, to ensure full consideration I have officially requested the India Office to prevent any action being taken in India until we have received and communicated a letter from de Giers [1] on this subject which we are advised left Livadia on Sunday."

Both leaders were apparently a little nervous as to how their interference might be received. "Yesterday I wrote as I promised to Hardy," reported Lord

[1] Russian Foreign Minister.

Beaconsfield on the 12th; "considering his somewhat peppery disposition, I fear he may 'flare up in the inside' as our friend Bismarck phrases it." But there was no reason for alarm. Lord Salisbury's message was duly communicated to Scotland, and Lord Cranbrook, though apparently rather puzzled at M. de Giers' sudden introduction upon the scene, accepted it without protest. His letter ends on a fine note, "Pray let me know your feelings without scruple about mine—in such grave affairs frankness ought never to do harm."[1] The following day he himself telegraphed instructions to Calcutta for the mission to be held back until further orders.

Lord Salisbury returned to Puys, but correspondence between the Prime Minister and his two Secretaries of State continued during the next few days. They discussed the instructions to be given to the Viceroy. Lord Salisbury was convinced that on policy Lord Lytton's views did not materially differ from his own,—had little doubt but that the mission must be sent,—but was anxious to avoid a challenge thrown down to Russia or any forma breach with the Afghan. Late events had produced a ferment throughout the Mahommedan world, which in the face of a Christian attack would unite in his defence all the Amir's normally rebellious tribes. The Prime Minister agreed. "I have put before him (Lord Cranbrook) those views respecting the modification of the Viceroy's instructions which occurred to us—mainly to yourself—but which I entirely approve." (*September 17.*)

But while Ministers at home were exchanging ideas as to the policy to be pursued, their representatives in India were acting. The Calcutta telegram had disturbed Lord Salisbury because it announced a new

[1] September 14, 1878.

departure. He had intended that if the mission had to be sent forward without the Amir's consent, it should advance through the Kurum Valley to Candahar, where his rule was not popular, and thus avoid collision with the fanatical tribes round Cabul and render a general attack unnecessary. This policy—which had been Lord Lytton's[1]—still held with the Home Government, and they assumed that their restraining message had ensured that the way would be left open for it. But the complication so imperatively deprecated by Lord Salisbury the year before had intervened—military preparations had forced the hand of the civil Government. When the telegram of the 13th reached the Viceroy, his frontier officers were already engaged upon negotiations with the semi-independent Khyber tribes for the passage of the mission, and they assured him that to postpone it now, especially after the notorious disrespect with which the Amir had treated his letters, would be to incur the contempt of the tribesmen and risk a permanent loss of their support. Lord Lytton paused for a week to allow fair time for the receipt of the Russian answer for which he had been told to wait, and then, on September 20, without further reference home, ordered the mission to advance. At the entrance of the Khyber it was stopped by the commander of the Afghan garrison at Ali Musjid and was compelled to return to Peshawur before a threat of force which it was not equipped to resist. Lord Salisbury recognised that in the presence of such a public affront hostilities had become inevitable. He protested strongly against the Viceroy's independent action and still hoped to avoid the necessity for an advance on Cabul.

[1] *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 116.

To Lord Beaconsfield, September 24, 1878.

"I hope he won't attempt to force the Khyber or to take Cabul. If he occupies Candahar he will probably not be molested—or at all events will have no formidable defile to secure. Once there, he may keep the place, telling the Amir that his hostile bearing has made this step a necessity, and threatening heavier punishment if he is guilty of any further demonstrations of an unfriendly character. In that way we shall probably be able to keep Candahar permanently—which is an object; and we shall run no risk of a 'Bosnia.'"

To Lord Cranbrook, September 26, 1878.

"I hope that we shall not make an attempt to take Cabul. It will bring us into a nest of hornets and place on us the duty of providing for the future government of Afghanistan. If we go up the Bolan and take Candahar, we can keep it, and shall not be bound to meddle with the fanatical tribes who inhabit the Cabul-Khyber country."

He wrote in the same sense to Sir Stafford Northcote: "I am urging Beaconsfield and Cranbrook to be satisfied with taking—and keeping—Candahar as a material guarantee." (*September 27.*)

Final decision awaited the receipt of an announced letter from the Amir,—which proved when it came to be wholly unsatisfactory. During the interval, Lord Salisbury, who was now back in England, continued to press his views upon his colleagues.

To Lord Beaconsfield, October 22, 1878.

"That a breach with the Amir was inevitable sooner or later I quite believe, but the time has been chosen with singular infelicity. It would have strengthened us much in our struggle to get Russia

out of the Balkan Peninsula if we could have deferred this affair for a year.

"But we are in the mess and must get out of it. . . . If immediate action is thought necessary (which is quite conceivable) I should limit it to the taking of some material guarantee—to use your phrase—which would facilitate further operations, if they become necessary. Probably the occupation of the Kurum Valley would answer this purpose best. I should be disposed to veto operations in the Khyber for the present, and the advance to Candahar need not be authorised—as, if I understand rightly, it can be undertaken at any time of year.

"But whatever discretion we may think it wise to give to the local authorities as regards military operations, I trust we shall keep all declarations of policy in our own hands. . . .

"I should propose to occupy the Kurum Valley as a measure of precaution; at the same time to send a native messenger to the Amir with a letter asking him concisely whether he will receive an embassy or not; saying that we have no wish to withdraw our friendship from him—but that we cannot submit to his receiving embassies from other Powers while he refuses to receive one from us; and that, as an earnest of our intentions on that head, we had occupied the Kurum Valley. In short, my counsel is to minimise both the action and the splash."

The Prime Minister and Lord Cairns agreed with Lord Salisbury in advocating this policy. But the departmental chiefs both in London and Calcutta were resolute that the continued defiance of the Amir could be met only by the defeat of his armies and the general invasion of his territory. A final Cabinet was held on October 30, at which, after a stormy discussion, their views prevailed. The granting of a further period of grace was agreed to, and an ultimatum was sent requiring an apology from Shere

Ali within a delay of three weeks, with consent to receive the British mission. No answer was returned, and on November 20 British troops crossed the frontier at three points.

Parliament was called together in special session and the Houses met on December 5,—the Opposition being even more bitterly denunciatory of the Government's policy than they had been on the Eastern question. As regarded the military operations there was no room for criticism. The campaign —in which General Roberts for the first time distinguished himself in command—was brilliant in its rapidity, in the comparatively small loss of life by which it was accompanied, and in its completely victorious result. Its success constituted in some sort a reply to Lord Salisbury's condemnation of the Viceroy for having allowed too free a hand to his military advisers in their preparatory measures. If these had increased the chances of war they had secured its effectual conduct when it came. The difference originated, in fact, in a dilemma which presents itself whenever there appears a possibility of war and has never been satisfactorily solved. When the fight was over, Lord Lytton defied extremist counsels after a fashion which justified the Foreign Secretary's belief in their fundamental agreement. Every precaution was taken to avoid the exasperation of fanatical feeling; the victorious troops were not allowed even to approach Cabul, and the terms exacted were of the utmost moderation. Lord Salisbury recognised the double achievement in a spontaneous note of congratulation.

To Lord Lytton, May 23, 1879.

"I cannot allow the conclusion of this affair, which is, I hope, reported to-day, to pass without

warmly congratulating you on the great success you have achieved and the brilliant qualities you have displayed. To my eyes, the wise restraint in which you have held the eager spirits about you is not the least striking of your victories. If only the Queen was served in Africa as she is in Asia! The great military success has done us yeoman's service in negotiating with Russia; and I hope that the moderation of your terms will be of no small utility at Constantinople."

During the brief interval before victory in this campaign was assured, an impetus had been given, as Lord Salisbury had anticipated, to Pan-Slavist adventure in the Balkans. A Bulgarian revolt had been stirred up in Macedonia, while various Russian officials in the occupied territory had set themselves with renewed energy to qualify or defeat the Treaty settlement.

To Lord A. Loftus, October 16, 1878.

"The usual duality of Russian policy is again making itself apparent. In Turkey they are conducting themselves as if their one object was to go to war with England. Every trick which it is possible for imagination to conceive, every subtle misconstruction of the Treaty, is being used for the purpose of hindering the proper execution of the Treaty. But from Livadia we get nothing but very properly phrased professions of an intention to abide by the Treaty. Andrassy assures us, as his own personal opinion, that the Czar means to abide by the Treaty, and I think most of the indications point in that direction. But that there is a party which will oppose the strongest resistance to such a policy is only too evident. Our policy seems to me to be simple. All kinds of difficulties will be placed in our way during the organisations and delimitations prescribed by the Treaty. We do not intend, however, if we can

help it, to quarrel on any of these subsidiary points. The great question is, Will they evacuate on the 3rd of May all the territories south of the Danube,—or rather of Roumania ? If not, I do not see how peace can be preserved, for, having induced the Turk on faith of the Treaty to evacuate Batoum, Varna and Schumla, it is impossible that we can leave him in the lurch. The Czar understands the meaning of a point of honour, and I am hopeful that he will recognise this as one which we should be disgraced if we gave up."

To Lord Odo Russell, November 27, 1878.

" Schouvaloff gives a terrible picture of the disorganisation of the Russian services—or rather their mutual independence—if one is to believe him. The Emperor is represented as having heard with horror and despair that any one in his service had been guilty of such an offence as fostering rebellious sentiments in the Bulgarians of Macedonia. As for the embassy to Cabul, it appears to have been self-generated. Schouvaloff had heard nothing of it the whole time he was at Berlin—nor during the three weeks he afterwards spent at St. Petersburg. Only when he got to Wilbad he saw it in the newspapers. He immediately rushed to Gortchakoff and asked, ' Has there been any mission to Cabul ? ' Gortchakoff, putting his hand to his brow and reflecting,— ' Non, je ne le crois pas.' "

The resolve to accompany insistence upon Treaty obligations with a conciliatory attitude upon minor matters was carried out with careful consideration in detail on Lord Salisbury's part. In the new year a change was effected in the St. Petersburg embassy. Another post was found for the ambassador who, associated for nearly three years with the delivery of disagreeable messages, had become in himself a source of irritation to the Czar. He was replaced

by Lord Dufferin, who had just completed his appointment as Governor-General of Canada. The new ambassador was not a diplomat by profession, but his rare tact and the genius for personal attraction with which he was gifted pointed him out so manifestly for a work of political healing that his selection was scarcely criticised, even by those who were most sensitive to the claims of the service.

Lord Salisbury was often charged with secretiveness, and not without excuse. He believed in frankness as between the parties to a negotiation, but publicity, except on rare occasions, he looked upon as fruitful of mischief. Two instances appear in this correspondence, in connection with his Russian diplomacy at this time, which exemplify his alertness to foresee the indirectly provocative effects which might follow from an unwise publicity and his carefulness to guard against them. The Amir, as soon as his defeat was certain, had fled the country precipitately, and among the papers which fell into the hands of the invading troops was a letter which showed beyond controversy the intimacy of his relations with Russia. As a refusal to believe in the existence of such relations formed a prominent feature in the Opposition indictment of ministers, the party leaders were naturally anxious for the immediate publication of this document. Lord Salisbury protested.

To Lord Cranbrook, January 3, 1879.

"I should prefer the publication being postponed if possible. The nature of my apprehension is this: Pride and national feeling are struggling hard in the breast of the Emperor and his advisers with the sore necessity which compels them to be reasonable. If it is openly published, on the Amir's own authority, that he had thrown himself into the arms of Russia,

appealed to them for protection, and practically tendered to them his submission, it may give a powerful argument to those who wish to persuade the Czar that patriotism requires him to throw prudential considerations to the winds — or that his honour requires him to support a prince who has lost all by trusting to him.

"If there is any counter-object to be served by publishing the letter, I have nothing to say. But if the matter is open, and there is no particular object in publishing, then I should say that our relations with Russia will be smoother and Russia's conduct more exemplary if it is postponed."

In the other instance, the danger to be guarded against was even more indirect. Count Andrassy, whose indiscretion was a frequent cause of complaint, had appealed for complete frankness between the two Governments as to negotiations entered into by either of them with the Russian Court.

To Sir Henry Elliot, April 16, 1879.

"I feel that, in the relations in which we stand to Austria, it would be very much better if we could work in a glass beehive before each other. But Andrassy's indiscretions make it a very serious difficulty to do so on all occasions. He either lets out the actual text of despatches, as he did in the case of mine on January 26 to Loftus, or he tells everything to Eber.[1] Now, negotiations with Russia have this peculiarity about them ;—that the mere mention of them, however innocent they may be, drives a considerable number of people in this country immediately insane. I am rather nervous, therefore, in those cases about Andrassy's indiscretions. What he says to Eber raises a howl here which creates a fury at St. Petersburg, and a salutary arrangement, which might otherwise have been accepted, fails."

[1] At this time correspondent of the *Times* newspaper at Buda-Pesth.

The British Government had good reason for seeking an early and peaceful solution of European difficulties. While the army in India was still occupied in finishing up the Afghan campaign, news reached England of a sudden and unexpected disaster in South Africa. Troops, rashly advanced into Zululand, had been surrounded and cut to pieces by a vastly superior body of savages at Isandhlwana, and reinforcements had to be immediately sent out. And now to this double burden on the frontiers of the Empire there was added, in April, the agitation of an acute crisis in Egypt.

The experiment of a responsible Ministry had broken down. Mistakes had no doubt been made. Nubar Pasha and his European colleagues had ignored the essential power of which nothing could divest the Khedive, so long as he was on the throne, and had enforced upon him an effacement and a subjection which he found intolerably humiliating. He had retorted by offering himself as a champion of national sentiment against them, and in spite of his record of tyranny and extortion had secured a prompt response by methods hidden from Western comprehension. In January, assisted by an insurrection of 2000 disbanded army officers, he had got rid of Nubar Pasha as Prime Minister,—but still affirmed his loyalty to the constitutional reform of August and left the two European Ministers undisturbed. They continued to treat him in much the same fashion as before, and Mr. Vivian disapproved of their attitude so strongly and concealed his disapproval so little that a public quarrel between himself and Mr. Rivers Wilson resulted. The only control which the British Government could exercise over the Khedive's British Minister was through the influence of its diplomatic agent, and, under the circumstances,

there was nothing for it but to call Mr. Vivian home on leave. But a letter addressed to the official who took over his work, Mr. Frank Lascelles,[1] showed that on the merits of the dispute Lord Salisbury sympathised with his subordinate.

To Mr. Lascelles, March 28, 1879.

"I write a line by this mail, though I feel that events move with you so fast that a letter which will not reach you for a week is of very little use. What I wish to do is to call your attention and that of Mr. Wilson to the dangerous policy which he seems to me to be pursuing. He has practically no physical force behind him, and he is acting as if he were the master of many legions. We cannot at present act materially against the Khedive by occupying Egypt, and if we cannot do it ourselves we certainly cannot allow France to do it alone. Consequently, if the Khedive were to pluck up a heart and to resist *à outrance*, Mr. Wilson and H.M.G. would be simply helpless. It is needless to say that neither we nor he have any hold on the affection of the Egyptian people or the Egyptian army, and therefore we could dispose of no internal force to coerce the Khedive. It is quite true that he is a very timid man, that he is frightened by the appearance of ships of war which cannot possibly hurt him, and that an undefined terror of what European Powers might do has hitherto been a motive strong enough to induce him to make considerable sacrifices. But it is a very hazardous policy to rely too much on fears which are the result of pure delusion. . . . You will ask me if I mean by this to discourage Mr. Wilson in his reforming efforts as being attended with too much danger. By no means. I only mean that, having

[1] Then Secretary of Legation at Rome, whence, being close at hand, he went under telegraphic orders to take temporary charge at Cairo during Mr. Vivian's absence on leave. He was soon afterwards appointed first Minister at the new Court at Sofia.

no sure basis for the emotion of terror, he should use that of hope. The only security against some desperate plunge on the part of the Khedive is to make him feel that his actual position, even under the care of a reforming Ministry, is more tolerable than it would be if he were left to himself amid the hazards of bankruptcy. . . .

"We should wish you to support Mr. Wilson thoroughly in all questions in which you can properly interfere, but we hope you will press upon him the necessity of conciliating and gaining rather than of effacing the Khedive. We are not strong enough to defy him. At least, it is too hazardous a policy in the present explosive condition of the world."

Echoes of the Cairo quarrel were heard in London, and charges were publicly made against the Consul-General, based largely on ignorance of the facts. He was anxious for a publication of documents, which Lord Salisbury had to refuse on public grounds. He offered his subordinate the consolation of a similar experience.

To Mr. Vivian, April 6, 1879.

"The inconvenience of which you complain is, I fear, incident to the business and cannot be escaped. I have of late frequently been made the object of accusations which the publication of papers would dissipate, but I know they never can be published. Sir H. Elliot and Sir H. Layard have still more cause to complain. The only consolation is that such calumnies never permanently affect the estimation in which a man is held, and are forgotten almost as lightly as they are invented."

Three days after this letter was written, the Khedive took the plunge which Lord Salisbury had foreshadowed. Mr. Rivers Wilson, as Finance Minister, had presented the draft of a financial scheme

based upon the recommendations of the Commission of Enquiry. It recognised Egypt's incapacity to meet her engagements and provided for a general composition in which not only the bondholders and certain hitherto favoured classes of taxpayers would bear their share of sacrifice, but also the Khedive's privy purse. To the Khedive that was the final challenge. His rooted resolve to suffer no diminution in his personal expenditure,—or, in the end, in his despotic authority,—were the really decisive facts of the situation, and Lord Cromer has left it on record as his opinion that nothing that could have been done, or left undone, that year could have affected the ultimate issue. The Pasha had made his preparations for the crisis. He had drawn up a rival scheme, financially fantastic, which left his own pocket and that of the privileged taxpayers untouched, and could only have achieved even a temporary solvency through further gross extortions from the wretched peasantry. Copies of this were circulated unbeknown to Ministers, and petitions in its favour were obediently signed by the Chamber of Notables, the Ulemas, the officials, all, indeed, that was articulately representative of national opinion in Egypt. On April 9, the Khedive invited the Consuls-General to the Palace,—informed them of his intention to adopt at once the measure thus pressed upon him by his faithful subjects, and to govern henceforth through a Cabinet exclusively composed of Egyptians. The same evening Mr. Rivers Wilson and M. de Blignières [1] were summarily dismissed and replaced by creatures of his own. Personal rule had been triumphantly re-established.

The Western Governments were for the moment, as the British Foreign Minister had anticipated, helpless in the presence of this stroke of state. Since

[1] The French Minister for Public Works in Nubar's Cabinet.

neither was prepared for military action, threats were hazardous. "We must make up our minds what we shall do if refused,—that is of more importance than determining what we shall ask for," Lord Salisbury wrote to his chief on the 13th. On other grounds he was not anxious to interfere too quickly. In her own interests it was desirable that Egypt's insolvency should be fully demonstrated. In the position to which Ismail had reduced the country, the bankruptcy that must certainly follow if he were left to himself might possibly be the best issue for his unfortunate subjects. That was naturally not the view taken by the great financial houses in France who were interested in the Debt and who pressed urgently for immediate intervention.

To Lord Lyons, April 10, 1879.

"It may be quite tolerable and even agreeable to the French Government to go into partnership with the bondholders; or rather, to act as Sheriff's officer for them. But to us it is a new and embarrassing sensation. Egypt never can prosper as long as some 85 per cent of her revenue goes in paying interest on her debt. We have no wish to part company with France; still less do we mean that France should acquire in Egypt any special ascendency; but, subject to these two considerations, I should be glad to be free of the companionship of the bondholders."

To Lord Lyons, May 21, 1879.

"The fiscal condition is now so hopeless that I am rather grateful to the Khedive for refusing to put it into the hands of an English Minister. I doubt whether any European can now undertake it without discredit, until the country has gone into liquidation. The disproportion between the debt and the revenue —joined to the difficulties which have now been

raised by the action of the courts and the attitude of the other Powers—makes effective, or even humane, government hopeless till there has been a bankruptcy. . . ."

The " attitude of the other Powers " here alluded to had been initiated—to the general surprise—by Germany, who had hitherto professed a complete " disinterestedness " in the question. The Khedive's scheme had involved a slight lowering of interest on the loan, and this, according to the 1876 settlement, could only be effected with international consent. He had promulgated the scheme by decree on April 22. The German Government, on May 12, entered a protest in which it refused to recognise the legality of this decree, and on its invitation the rest of the Powers supported its action.

To Lord Odo Russell, June 11, 1879.

" I am much gratified to hear that Bismarck was pleased at our having supported his Egyptian protest ; —but what conceivable motive brought him into the matter at all ? Of course, if Bleichröder has bonds, all is simple ; but if that overruling motive was not present, it is very hard to explain his sudden interest in Egyptian finance. My chief motive for joining the German protest was to push the Khedive a little nearer the edge ; because, until we get him thrown over, there will be no decent government in Egypt. But I am afraid some time will elapse before he is weak enough to be upset by protests."

The crying need for " decent government " was fast obscuring all other considerations. The Khedive was nearer the edge than this letter suggested. The sufferings of the fellaheen under a recrudescence of all the worst old methods of oppressive tax-gathering

had already found faint but menacing voice in a growing discontent among the soldiery. The protest of the Powers had destroyed, even to the comprehension of the blindest self-delusion, the last chance of financial extrication. On June 19, the two Governments decided that action might be risked, and their representatives formally proposed to the Khedive to abdicate. He refused, and, unless other influences could be brought to bear upon him, it seemed probable that he would fight. Negotiations had been for some time in progress at Constantinople,—on the Turkish side, no doubt, with both parties to the quarrel. The Porte had at first shown itself hesitatingly favourable to the two Christian Powers. But on May 29, Lord Salisbury had noted to Sir Henry Layard a change of tone from which he inferred "that a good deal of money had been either sent or promised to the Palace" from Cairo. The Sultan was now invited to act; the Ambassador laboured strenuously; for a week the issue was in suspense. On the 23rd, private information came from Egypt that the suzerain was secretly encouraging resistance in his vassal, and a fierce message to the Porte was transmitted through Sir Henry. Either that or other influences were effectual, and on the 26th a firman of deposition was issued before which Ismail Pasha submitted, and on June 30 left Egypt never to return. His son, Tewfik Pasha, was nominated as his successor.

The burden of acknowledged control was now to be shouldered—and in partnership. Experience had shown that the experiment of responsible European Ministers was not one to be repeated. During the crisis of the deposition Lord Salisbury wrote to impress the fact through Lord Lyons upon the French Government:

To Lord Lyons, June 25, 1879.

"I have great doubts as to the wisdom of re-appointing European Ministers. The Mussulman feeling is still so strong that I believe we shall be safer and more powerful as wirepullers than as ostensible rulers. Vivian suggests the appointment to the two Departments of Finance and Public Works of 'Aide-Ministers.' I believe there used to be (in the days when there were Pashas) in attendance on all the Pashas an important Armenian, who I think had the title of Vakil, and who practically managed everything. I should prefer to see the 'influence' of the two Western nations exerted in some such modest manner."

To Lord Lyons, July 15, 1879.

"I am very much of the opinion that the control should take the form of inspection. It is the only form of control likely to be effective. Actual authority we cannot exercise. We tried to do it through the European Ministers, but, when the stress came, the disbanded officers proved to us that two pairs of arms are not much use against two thousand. The only form of control we have is that which is called moral influence, which in practice is a combination of nonsense, objurgation and worry. In this we are still supreme and we have many modes of applying it,—diplomatic notes—consular interviews—newspapers—Blue-books. We must devote ourselves to the perfecting of this weapon. And, obviously, the first condition of its use is complete knowledge of what is going on. The exchange, therefore, of nominal authority for real inspectorship is a step in the right direction. It is facing facts."

A policy in this sense was decided upon. The influence of the two Powers upon the Egyptian Government was to be exerted through Controllers having no direct executive authority. M. Waddington

appointed M. de Blignières as the French representative and Lord Salisbury offered the British Controllership to Major Evelyn Baring, who had already acquired reputation in Egyptian finance as a Commissioner of the Debt and whose character and ability had strongly impressed the Foreign Secretary. The anxiety to minimise official intervention, which he had displayed ever since he had accepted the policy of "parity of influence," was still apparent.

To Lord Lyons, July 17, 1879.

"I have seen de Blignières and Baring and have talked over with them and Vivian the plan of control which Waddington has given you. In the main it suits our ideas very well, which are, as far as possible, to induce the Turks to govern under our advice, but to leave to them the externals of authority. I rather like their having no power—because all the actual pressure on the native authorities will pass through the Agents' hands; and there will not be in the eyes of the world the direct responsibility on the two Governments for the grievous shortcomings which even under the most favourable conditions are inevitable. It is quite possible that the plan of governing through the Turks[1] may fail altogether. But we shall not be in a worse position to apply ulterior remedies than we are now. . . . There is in this control plan of Waddington's one novelty which I would gladly have avoided—but which I fear it is too late now to struggle against. The English Controller is to be immovable without the consent of the English Government, and is to obey English orders. This is a considerable advance in the direction of 'ingérence' over anything we did either in the case of Rivers Wilson or Romaine. But I suppose

[1] The reference is to the men of Turkish race who form the governing class in Egypt, not to the inhabitants of Turkey.

that after having a Khedive deposed the character of non-intervention is not easy to retain; and any further prudery would be out of place."

A more difficult negotiation lay beyond. Though the Western Powers had taken charge before Egypt had become actually bankrupt, her financial condition was admittedly desperate. It was at once decided to appoint an international Commission of Liquidation to legalise a composition with her creditors,—but the extent of its powers was not so easy to agree upon. Lord Salisbury was resolute from the first that, if England intervened, it must be as trustee for the interests of the country and not of the bondholders. He discussed beforehand with Lord Lyons the principle upon which the liquidators should work, and concluded his letter: "I think also they should be instructed *first* to determine how much is necessary in order to carry on the Government, and then apportion the residue as may seem to them just. But perhaps this last doctrine should not be talked of just yet." (*June 25.*)

The Egyptian Government, under the guidance of Major Baring and his colleague, might be trusted to make a first claim upon the revenue for administrative necessities, and it was evidently in the interests of the creditors themselves that those necessities should be met. But diplomacy had first to clear the way through the hamper of international obligations. At that moment it looked as if there would be very little "residue" left to apportion, and each category of bondholder was struggling to make itself secure. What was essential was to give the Commission a free hand. It was some weeks before Lord Salisbury could bring the French Government round to this point of view. In the summer he sent a statement to Sir Stafford as to the present position of the

negotiation—presumably for his information in dealing with House of Commons curiosity.

"In order to bring about a settlement it is proposed to appoint a Commission of Liquidation; which shall have an international character, and which shall prepare a scheme.

"But is this scheme to embrace the whole of the debts, or only a portion of them?

"France wishes to confine its labours to the unfunded debt (some seven or eight millions), and to leave the much larger funded debt (some [*sic*] millions), to be dealt with according to the proposals of the Commission of Enquiry, which reported last year before the attempt to form the Nubar Ministry. We on our side desire that the Liquidation Commission should go into all classes of debt." [1]

The funded debt formed seven-eighths of the whole, and the proposals referred to limited the possible reduction of its interest to 5 per cent from the existing 6. In the first week of August Lord Salisbury wrote to Sir Stafford that "the hitch was still unsurmounted," but on September 19 he was able to announce to Lord Beaconsfield that "matters had got straight at last." "He (M. Waddington) consents to our idea of liquidation; *i.e.* including all creditors and not securing a special 5 per cent to one class."

Difficulties with other Governments intervened, and it was not till just before Lord Salisbury left office that the Commission was finally appointed with full powers. It was able, in the event, to secure sufficient revenue for the expenses of government by decreeing an all-round reduction of interest to 4 per cent;—the rigid economy which the Controllers had in the meantime introduced into the

[1] Memorandum, July 1879.

administration not only making this result possible, but securing for it the ready acquiescence of creditors.

Towards the close of this negotiation, Lord Salisbury commented upon the attitude of his continental colleagues.

To Sir Henry Elliot, December 30, 1879.

"Matters appear to be going fairly well at Cairo, and if Tewfik pays to the creditors all the surplus he has got, no one can claim any more. It is an unpleasant reflection that—as regards Egypt—France, Austria and Germany have all shaped their diplomatic action, and that with great perseverance, purely to satisfy the interests of certain bankers who were able to put pressure on their foreign offices. It is a new feature in diplomacy."

The method of frank warning upon essential points, coupled with the avoidance of needless provocation, had succeeded at St. Petersburg so far as immediate business was concerned. In the course of that spring the Czar at length succeeded in convincing his unruly subordinates that the Congress settlement must be accepted. "I think," writes Lord Salisbury to Lord Odo on February 19, "earnest efforts are being made at St. Petersburg to rein in those two fiery chargers, Dondoukoff and Tsereteleff."[1] A plea that the fixed date of May 3 should be construed as that of the beginning and not the close of evacuation was allowed by the neutral powers on the understanding—which was adhered to—that the process should be completed within three months. By August 3 the Russian troops had entirely withdrawn from the Balkans, and Lord Dufferin asked for a message of appreciative acknowledgement.

[1] Russian representatives on the Constituent Commissions of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia.

To Lord Dufferin, August 5, 1879.

"I have strongly advised Lord Beaconsfield to panegyrise the virtues of the Emperor of Russia in his speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet. This will be a more effective mode of carrying out your recommendation than a despatch could be—if the speech comes out all right. But on former occasions, Lord B., who gets tired as the night advances, has on one or two occasions left out essential sentences of his intended speech—and the result has not corresponded to his expectations. So I give you notice beforehand that, whatever is actually reported, the speech is intended to be a panegyric of Alexander."

The settlement was now completed. Bulgaria, north of the Balkans, had been started upon its independent career and the Turks were left in sole possession of the southern province. But the fuller knowledge obtained during the last twelve months had by now prepared Lord Salisbury for a disappointment of expectations on either side.

To Sir H. Elliot, April 9, 1879.

"Whether the Turks are ultimately able to secure the 'political and military domination of the Sultan' must depend on their own strength. We have helped to give them their Treaty rights and we can insist on the retirement of the Russians, but the rest must be for them. We can no more make the weaker of the two parties into the stronger permanently than we can force two and two to make five."

In May, in referring to a declaration of the newly appointed Prince of Bulgaria (Alexander of Battenberg) that he intended to act in "a spirit of independence of Russia," Lord Salisbury notes the fact that "the Bulgarians are not Slavs in race." On that and other grounds he thinks the Prince's purpose

will be easier to achieve "than is generally believed."[1] The common superstition of a Pan-Slavist Bulgaria was still apparently unshaken.

Russia's compliance, however, did not indicate resignation. Her resentment at the defeat which she had sustained at Berlin had become accentuated during the period of settlement which followed. It was directed mainly against Germany. England's opposition was discounted, but from her ancient ally Russia had expected unstinted support in the minor negotiations over military and administrative detail and over questions of frontier delimitation which had occupied diplomacy since the Berlin Congress. She had not only expected it, but had apparently claimed it with something of the arrogance which had belonged to her traditional relations with her erstwhile dependent neighbour, but which the developments of the last twelve years had made singularly inappropriate. Coincidently her hostility to Austria had become more pronounced. The shifty uncertainties of that Empire's diplomacy had probably embittered it, but, of necessity, to the Pan-Slavists, whom the Czar in his disappointment had recalled to his counsels, the Teutonic rulers of Slav populations must remain irreconcilably "the enemy." The result was inevitable. Prince Bismarck had already "opted" between his two neighbours, and his decision of reason was not likely to be shaken by the irritable criticism of the Czar and his Ministers.

To Sir H. Elliot, May 22, 1879.

"The most disquieting symptom at the present moment seems to be the Russian intrigue for inducing the Porte to reject the Austrian secret article. This

[1] To the Queen, May 12, 1879.

can have no motive but an idea of some day or other uniting all the forces in the Balkan Peninsula, Moslem and Christian, against Austria. A strange dream,—but it derives some support from young Evans' story, that in Bosnia the peasants loudly talk of the prospect of Russia appearing in their country in two years' time, and destroying Austria altogether. It is also a little disquieting that Russia should recently have made arrangements for raising her mobilised army to 3,200,000 men. Münster constantly holds language to me tending to show that Bismarck is disgusted with the Russians and is not working with them. Odo Russell entirely disbelieves these intimations and thinks they are only blinds. I am not quite so confident. All Bismarck is doing looks like clearing the decks for action. He has made overtures to the Hanover people, he is making it up with the clergy. . . . I doubt whether they have got over the fear of a French and Russian junction. Has Andrassy ever mentioned the increase of force to you ? "

After the evacuation was complete relations between the two Empires grew even more strained. The approaching recall of Count Schouvaloff was talked of,—the German Chancellor's friend and the man upon whom, for his share in the Congress settlement, Pan-Slavist indignation was concentrated. In September the Czar addressed a letter to his uncle of Germany which was said to be menacing in its implications. Mr. Crowe, the British Consul-General at Düsseldorf, whose opportunities of information covered a wide field, did not share in the ambassador's belief as to the essential permanence of Russo-German friendship. He reported to Lord Salisbury the efforts that were being made by the militarist party at St. Petersburg to widen the existing rift. The Czar was being assured that secret orders had been given by the German Government to its representatives upon

the various delimitation Commissions which were still at work to vote consistently against his own officers. Lord Salisbury doubted the existence of these orders—as did his correspondent. Matters had not yet got so far, but he had noted indications of a spontaneous growth of anti-Russian feeling among German soldiers.

To Mr. Crowe, September 17, 1879.

"I doubt much the truth of the accusation against Germany that she has instructed her delimitation Commissioners to vote against Russia. What appears to me to have happened on more than one occasion is that the German Commissioner has in the first instance voted against the Russian view of his own accord and that subsequently he has either changed his vote or abstained under pressure from Berlin.

"Perhaps these instructions from Berlin have not been so urgent as they were at first. But, though the Government of Germany in this way may have shown itself less Russian than it was in 1878, the more conspicuous symptom has been the readiness of every German officer to vote against Russia whenever he was left to himself."

Report, both private and public, was already grouping continental Europe into hostile camps. "Rumours are rife of growing coolness between Russia and Germany," wrote Lord Salisbury on the 16th to Mr. Malet, the chargé d'affaires at Constantinople. "Some persons believed to be well informed think that Russia is organising in conjunction with France and Italy an attack on Germany and Austria. If so, Russia will have to leave Turkey to itself for the present." On the 19th, M. Waddington came down to Dieppe for the express purpose of contradicting these reports so far as he was concerned. The visit

was announced in all the continental papers and was proclaimed as an anti-Russian demonstration.

To Lord Beaconsfield, September 19, 1879.

"I have had Waddington here all day. He came on his own proposition apparently to convince me that if Russia and Italy were making plans to attack Germany and Austria, France would take no part in any such ideas; and that he had assured Bismarck in the most positive terms that he might rely on the neutrality of France. He seemed to me to be at great pains to set forth his attachment to Bismarck."

But the complementary grouping was undoubtedly in process of effective formation. A formal alliance between Austria and Germany was known to be under negotiation. Count Andrassy, whose approaching retirement had been published, was continuing to hold office until this crowning fulfilment of his policy had been achieved. Prince Bismarck was engaged in a last strenuous struggle with his master in the matter,—in which threats of resignation, proclamations of broken health and a haughty retirement to Varzin played their accustomed parts. Towards the end of the month authoritative information on the subject reached the British Government.

On the 27th Lord Beaconsfield reported to Lord Salisbury, who was still at Puys, that Count Münster had visited him at Hughenden,—that he had dwelt upon the growing hatred of all things German in Russia, and upon Prince Bismarck's anxiety to escape from the thraldom which friendship with her imposed. The proposal for a British alliance which he had made three years before had been inspired by this anxiety. The Three Emperors' Alliance, the alternative policy, had now altogether broken down; the Czar had

surrendered himself into the hands of the Pan-Slavists and was preparing to attack Austria; the Chancellor had reverted to his earlier idea and, to secure the peace of the world, now proposed an alliance between Germany, Austria, and Great Britain. But he had no wish to embark on fruitless negotiations and, unless the Prime Minister favoured the idea, would not proceed further. Lord Beaconsfield, premising that his Government could do nothing to imperil England's good relations with France,—of which Count Münster assured him that there would be no danger,—had expressed himself as favourable to the principle of an alliance or good understanding, but had pointed out that all would depend on the application of that principle, and had therefore insisted that the proposition could only be effectively discussed with the Foreign Secretary. He had invited Count Münster to obtain Prince Bismarck's leave to open the matter to Lord Salisbury, and the ambassador promised to write,—deprecating hurry,—and saying that he should probably receive an answer by the time Lord Salisbury returned to England.[1]

Such was the gist of the communication. The reply was somewhat sceptical.

To Lord Beaconsfield, September 29, 1879.

"Münster's budget is startling, but all the indications we have tell in the same direction. The only question is whether Russia is really seeking a quarrel, or whether Bismarck is forcing the offensive on her —as he did to Denmark, Austria, and France. For Russia to seek the quarrel as things are now seems madness. But if Bismarck wishes to rectify his eastern frontier—over which he often laments—the present time has many favourable circumstances. Russia is weakened, France is still disinclined for

[1] See *Life of Lord Beaconsfield*, vol. vi. pp. 486-490.

action, Austria and England are in a temper which makes them to lean to him, and makes it impossible they should work with Russia.

"This question does not affect our course very much. It will be very difficult for us not to go to Austria's assistance if she is seriously attacked by Russia—no matter how the attack comes about. But, as you say, the question is, how will it affect our position towards France? Would you like me to sound Waddington as to the attitude of the French Government if Austria were attacked by Russia, and England were to take part with Austria? I could do so easily and naturally going home through Paris, if you think it worth while to make him talk on the subject; and Germany need not be even mentioned in connection with it. If so, will you drop me a line?"

Lord Beaconsfield discouraged such enquiry as unnecessary,—if only in memory of the Tripartite Treaty, France could not possibly object to our defence of Austria. He opposed to Lord Salisbury's doubts the question as to whether, though Bismarck would undoubtedly play his own game, it might not at this moment be ours also. His imagination was evidently fired by the proposed alliance,—"it might probably be hailed with something like enthusiasm in the country";—even if it were not so and the country rejected it, the Government would retire from office as "the representatives of a strong and intelligent policy"—a reputation which would react later to the advantage of the party. He did not suggest any immediate action, but one feels that he had found his colleague's reception of his great news rather chill and uninspired.

The difference,—if any existed,—was not pressed home since, in the event, no decision was called for. In due course, Lord Salisbury returned to England

and Count Münster called at the Foreign Office. But he made no allusion to the Hughenden proposal.

To Lord Beaconsfield, October 13, 1879.

"I had three-quarters of an hour with Münster this afternoon, but he never brought out the secret. . . . His general tone was in harmony with what he said to you more precisely. He spoke of more assured alliance with Austria; of coldness and hostility on the part of Russia; of hope that England would agree with such an attitude; and would exert her influence to prevent France from joining Russia in any attack. Russia, he said, was now given over to the Pan-Slavists,—that the Emperor of Russia was much changed, and she meditated an attack on Austria,—that Germany would not allow it.

"I held language of a corresponding character—expressed the deep interest which England felt in preventing Austria from being weakened—and my belief that France would not take any rash action under her present Government. But he never advanced beyond vague generalities and expressions of 'tendency'; and there was nothing positive which I could reply to or analyse. He was careful to assure me that the relations between Austria and Germany were purely defensive. He also said that the Tsarevitch had become German, since his father had become Pan-Slavist, and that the grievance of the Russians was that Germany and 'cet infâme Schouvaloff' had prevented them from entering Constantinople.

"Schouvaloff came in a state of more profound depression than I have yet seen, but he only stayed a few minutes and disappeared."

Lord Beaconsfield pressed Lord Salisbury to open the matter directly, and he accordingly asked the German ambassador down to dine and sleep at Hatfield for that purpose. But he did not himself attribute

Count Münster's silence to any diffidence in taking the initiative. The reports received from our agents in Russia showed her Government to be already modifying its extreme anti-German attitude. If that was so, " Bismarck may no longer see the necessity of an agreement with us. Or he may have wanted our countenance in order to persuade his Emperor, and, that being done, may need us no longer. If so, we are well out of it, and he would have thrown us aside in any case." (*October 14.*)

To Lord Beaconsfield, October 15, 1879. *Hatfield.*

" Münster is here now and I have had a long talk with him about our matter. The reason of his not speaking to me was that he had not heard from B.; that Russia was putting some water into her wine and that therefore he thought there was no hurry.

" I stated to him our view—that Austria's position in Europe was a matter in which we took deep interest, and considered essential: that if Russia attacked Germany and Austria, Germany might rely on our being on her side. I said, ' I suppose the service you want of us would be to influence France and Italy to observe neutrality.' He replied, that was their object: that Metz and Strasburg made them tolerably safe from an attack on the south part of the frontier, but that they were open through Belgium and they wished to feel confident that we should not tolerate an attack through Belgium. Of that, I said, he might feel confident; and I was pretty sure that we could prevent any French Government from joining Russia against him; but that he might rely on our goodwill and assistance in the contingency of an attack on Austria and Germany.

" It was all very much in the sense and tone of his conversation with you, but it left the impression on my mind that, since he had spoken to you, there had been a slight change of mind and that B. is not

so keen now as then. . . . He will *try* and see B. at Berlin—so he said, his cue being to tone down the appearance of eagerness which his journey to Hughenden had shown.

"I go to Manchester to-morrow—for my sins—I shall not be back till Monday."

That was the last that was heard of Count Münster's overtures,—both the approach and the almost immediate retreat remaining an unexplained mystery. There was no self-evident reason why the proposal should ever have been made. For more than two years England had been consistently making common cause with Austria in resistance to Russia's restless aggressiveness, and such an assurance as Lord Salisbury had now given constituted no real advance upon the position already taken up. Yet it conveyed all the guarantee which the situation as described by Count Münster required. For what reason had anything further been wanted?—and why had the want been expressed in a fashion so equivocally informal and fugitive? A sub-note of enquiry is to be detected in the half-cynical, half-mocking references to the German Chancellor which appear in Lord Salisbury's correspondence throughout that winter.

The visit to Manchester alluded to in the letter just quoted was the occasion for a Tory demonstration on a vast scale. At the principal meeting which Lord Salisbury addressed in the Pomona Gardens there were said to be 100,000 persons present. The sixth year of the Parliament had almost run its course, Mr. Gladstone was conducting his Midlothian campaign of passionate invective, and Lord Salisbury's speech—which was generally regarded as one of his finest efforts in platform oratory—was mainly devoted to a militant defence of the Government's past policy. But he alluded in it to the Austro-German alliance,

rumours of which already filled the papers, and spoke of them as "glad tidings of great joy." He was criticised, not unreasonably, for irreverence in the use of that phrase. It was the outcome of his purely extemporary method of speaking—the familiar words coming readily to his lips as he sought to give emphatic expression to his rejoicing at this final removal of a long-dreaded danger. In his judgement, the event spelt peace for Europe as surely as the alternative conjunction between Germany and Russia would have spelt war.

On the 27th, the Austrian ambassador formally, but in strictest confidence, announced to him the conclusion of the alliance. No other Government, he said, had been similarly favoured. A week later his German colleague repeated the announcement in identical language. The alliance was stated to be a purely defensive one,—entered into for the maintenance of the *status quo*—and directed only against Russia. The enacting phrase declared that "in the event of Russia taking aggressive action, the two Powers were resolved to consider every attack against either of them as directed against both." On its second repetition to him, Lord Salisbury noted an ambiguity in the preceding phrasing which left it doubtful whether this pledge of mutual defence was general or restricted to disputes connected with the few still unfulfilled portions of the Berlin Treaty. He pointed the confusion out to Count Münster, who unhesitatingly insisted upon the general interpretation. Lord Salisbury inferred a characteristic instance of Prince Bismarck's methods with his master.

To the Queen, November 3, 1879.

"The curiously ambiguous form used leads Lord Salisbury to suspect that alterations were made in

the original draft, *apparently* limiting the object of the defensive Agreement to the unfulfilled parts of the Treaty of Berlin, in order to overcome the well-known scruples of the Emperor William; while the Ministers intended, and continue to intend, a general defensive alliance applicable to the case of *any* attack on the part of Russia."

To Lord Odo Russell, November 5, 1879.

"As the matter now stands, we have received communication (under a strict seal of secrecy which under the circumstances is comical) of the defensive Treaty; our approval of it has been asked and given; but our co-operation has not been solicited and naturally has not been promised. If Austria were really endangered by an attack from Russia, I do not believe the English Government—in whatever hands it was—could look on with unconcern; and obviously the chief kind of assistance we could render would be by discouraging France from joining with Russia in the attack on the German Powers. But I do not think either Waddington or any other representative of the Republican party has any idea of such a junction. Nothing could be more energetic than Waddington's repudiation of such an idea at Dieppe. What Bismarck's motive is is still mysterious. Karolyi used the strange expression, 'Bismarck was frightened at what he saw of Russia's intentions'; but Russia does not seem to be in a condition to frighten anybody—still less Germany. I am rather tempted to believe with M. 'Valbert' in the *Revue* that Bismarck will continue to be frightened at something or other till the next military budget has been passed."

The special emphasis upon Russian impotence referred no doubt to the series of audacious Nihilist outrages which had begun that year and with which the Czar's Government was already showing itself unable to cope. But to judge from a remark made

by Count Schouvaloff when he paid his farewell visit to the Foreign Office on his recall, if the Russia of that day did not give just cause of alarm to her neighbours, it was because the power rather than the will was wanting. The words were especially noticeable as coming from the opponent of militant Pan-Slavism. He was rebutting a suggestion that Prince Bismarck might, after all, be intending to invite Russia in as a third party in the Austro-German alliance.

To Lord Odo Russell, December 2, 1879.

"He deprecated any attempt on the part of Russia to join the Austro-German alliance and renew the Drei-Kaiser-Bund. For Russia could not either give or receive from Austria and Germany what they had given to each other, namely, a guarantee. She could not receive it—because there was no one against whom the two Powers could guarantee her; for they were the only Powers by whom her territory could be threatened. She could not give a guarantee because it was against her fundamental principles to guarantee the Slav possessions of a non-Slav Power such as Austria."

Lord Dufferin, returning to St. Petersburg from leave, was invited at Lord Salisbury's request to an interview at Varzin.

To Lord Dufferin, December 23, 1879.

"Many thanks for your interesting account of Bismarck's monologue. His very cynical account of his gradual conviction that Russia wanted blood-letting, and his resolution that it should be done at the cost of Turkey rather than of Austria, does not differ materially from what he told me last June. As he sticks to the story it may be taken as sub-

stantially true. It suggests the thought,—in what nation will his experienced medical eye next discern a necessity for depletion ? "

Though in his conversations with Lord Odo Russell the German Chancellor does not appear to have ever alluded directly to the September offer, he complained constantly at this time of the suspicion with which he was regarded by English statesmen, and accused Ministers of persistently rejecting his advances. Lord Salisbury denied the charge and, writing to Lord Odo, empowered him to assure the Prince of the Government's willingness, at all times, to co-operate with Germany. At the close of his letter he touched upon the circumstances which now encouraged such co-operation,—and also upon those which hereafter might forbid it.

To Lord Odo Russell, January 14, 1880.

" Of course we have to pick our steps so as not to seem to err from the straight path in France's eyes ; for France is capable of giving us a great deal of trouble. But, on the sound rule that you love those most whom you compete with least, Germany is clearly cut out to be our ally. Even our ancient friend Austria is not so completely free as Germany from any plans or interests which cross our own,— for the present. Matters will, of course, have changed if it should ever enter into Germany's head to desire Copenhagen or Rotterdam. That there is a party at the German Court which seriously look forward to the possession of Holland, I gather from the little Duchess of Connaught saying to me that she feared it would be a ' Zankapfel.' She doubtless spoke from what she had heard her father say.

" But from his dreams to reality there is a long step, and, intermediately, we may in all things cultivate Bismarck's friendship without fear."

This test of non-competition as the surest foundation of international friendship was strikingly illustrated in the subsequent history of Anglo-German relations—though not in connection with Holland. Lord Salisbury lived to see the emergence of Germany's colonial and naval ambitions and with it the transformation of the then existing good feeling towards England into a jealously hostile alienation. The cloud no bigger than a man's hand was even then just appearing above the horizon. Lord Odo refers in one of his letters[1] that winter to the enthusiasm stirred among patriotic dreamers (headed by that good friend of England the Crown Prince Frederick) by the Government guarantee just given to a trading company in Samoa. But the matter was without political importance: "Bismarck has never been favourable to the acquisition of colonies,"—an article in the great man's creed which unhappily did not gain acceptance among his disciples.

One last enterprise of Lord Salisbury's before he left office requires brief mention,—an effort to place Persia across the path of Russia's advance in Central Asia, by allowing her to take possession of Herat. It was only not of importance because it failed of achievement.

The Central Asian question had acquired prominence that autumn by the coincidence of a further move on the part of Russia with a fundamental change in the situation in Afghanistan. In the summer there had been another Russian expedition against the Turcomans, which had not been successful, but which had been followed in August by a formal announcement by M. de Giers to our ambassador that he regarded Merv as being within the rightful limits of Russian advance. In September 1879 Major

[1] December 20, 1879.

Cavagnari, who had gone to Cabul to conclude the final arrangements following upon the Treaty signed in the previous May, was treacherously murdered with his whole staff. British troops were again ordered up into the country,—but this time not to leave it until such measures of retributive precaution had been taken as seemed best calculated to avert future trouble. While the expedition was in preparation, eventual issues were debated between the Home and Indian Governments. The annexation of Candahar —the occupation of the Hindu passes,—were discussed. The Prime Minister corresponded again with his Foreign Secretary over Indian frontier policy. Lord Salisbury was opposed to extensive annexations. The all-important question for the future was the safeguarding of Herat,—the spot where the point of danger would be reached if Russia continued her advance. Its disposal, he urged, was the " real knot which had to be untied." [1] An opportunity seemed offered of removing it from the enfeebled grasp of the Cabul rulers. Persia had historic claims upon its sovereignty and was believed to covet its possession. The question occupied Lord Salisbury's thoughts and obtruded itself into a letter written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer on other subjects.

To Sir Stafford Northcote, September 24, 1879.

" The question—shall we lean on the Persian or the Afghan leg—is still perplexing. The Persian Shah is frightened of Russia, no doubt; and is therefore inclined to betray us. But the Afghan Amir (if not a traitor) is so weak that his good dispositions, supposing them to exist, are perfectly useless. To which then shall we confide Herat? The Shah may sell it; the Amir will certainly lose

[1] To Lord Beaconsfield, October 20, 1879.

it. We have a certain hold on both, *i.e.* we can do both a certain amount of harm. But that species of influence, though it may overcome ill-will or self-interest, is perfectly useless with impotence. I lean, therefore, to the belief that the Shah will serve us better in Herat than the Amir."

The Cabinet accepted this view, and in November the negotiation of a Convention with Persia was entered upon. It met with many delays. At the outset the success of the military operations had to be waited for,—Persia must not be pressed until our position in Afghanistan was secure; "It would not be prudent," wrote Lord Salisbury, "to put her in the position of a benefactor."[1] But he protested against other obstructions to progress;—the negotiations at Teheran would leak out,—Russian influences would be set in motion against us. The subject appeared to lend itself to Cabinet discussion, and at every stage reference had to be made to the Government in India. "I hope the Cabinet will consent to come to a definite decision to-morrow," he writes on January the 2nd to Lord Beaconsfield: "the matter won't bear keeping much longer." And on the 10th he is urging Lord Cranbrook, not for the first time, to press for a telegraphic answer from Calcutta to some proposition submitted to it. But, in spite of these delays, he appears to have been sanguine as to the success of his efforts almost up to the moment of their defeat.

To Lord Dufferin, February 4, 1880.

"Herat hangs fire a little,—it was to be expected that it would. The Shah of course bargains—and the Russians are probably doing their utmost by threats and promises to pull him back. But my

[1] To Lord Dufferin, December 23, 1879.

impression is that unless any accident happens at Cabul, the desire for Herat will prove too strong for him. . . . I do not look upon Persia's occupation of Herat as likely to be a permanent arrangement. Russia will resent it—and will take the earliest opportunity of punishing Persia—that opportunity cannot be very long delayed; and it may be one of the results of this operation that Persia will fall to pieces. But by that time our railway will be at Girishk and Russia will be entirely unable to attack Herat until she has got the railway at least as far as Meshed: and I think I may safely put that day beyond the lifetime of this generation. We shall also, I trust, be established commercially on the Karun river and able to protect Southern Persia if menaced, —which seems scarcely possible.

"It is a fallacy to assume that within our lifetime any stable arrangement can be arrived at in the East. The utmost we can do is to provide halting-places where the process of change may rest awhile. But what we have to do is rather to assume the probability of change, and so shape our precautions that it shall affect no vital interest of ours."

Some part of the injurious delay, and perhaps some failure of skill in the later stages of the enterprise, can be imputed to a suspension of his activities which occurred through illness in the third week of January. He was not able to be present at a Cabinet meeting on February the 11th, at which some proposition from Teheran was considered and demurred to. On the 13th a telegram was received from the British Minister there which heralded the breakdown of the negotiation. "It is evident," Lord Salisbury comments in a note to the Prime Minister, "that Russia, having had time unfortunately given her to work in, has bought the majority of the Council." (*February 13.*) No further allusion to the Persian Convention is to be found in his correspondence. A

letter to Lord Dufferin of March 21 shows him then to be preparing, as soon as the approaching elections were over, to enter, at the request of the Russian Government, upon a general negotiation with respect to the rival claims of the two Powers in Central Asia in which Herat was expected to occupy a prominent place.

The illness which had interposed was a serious one though trivial in its origin. He retained the hardy habit, in which he had been brought up, of a daily cold bath, and while still feverish from the effects of a slight chill, he rashly indulged in it. The chill struck in and produced a severe internal congestion, which for a day or two caused grave anxiety. Recovery was slow and was retarded by the impossibility of rest. This was the first of many similar occasions when his doctors would complain that they had to do their work under conditions as unfavourable in their way as those which any extreme of poverty or insanitary surroundings could produce. Two or three days were the utmost which were ever allowed for complete inaction ;—while the fever was still on him the more important messages from abroad were communicated and answered, and long before he was able to leave his bed two or three hours were daily devoted to reading or having read to him telegrams and despatches and dictating their replies. "How *is* the temperature to be brought down ?" the doctor would ask in indignant despair when he found red boxes piled by his patient's bedside and the coverlet littered with papers. But he had to acquiesce ;—apart from public necessities the fretting after work was recognised as a more injurious alternative than the work itself. And there was this mitigation that there was no fretting *over* it. The actual effort of

concentrated thought was all that had to be discounted,—his immunity from worry was his salvation at these times.

This illness was responsible for a notable change in his personal appearance. Though he had already lost the extreme leanness which characterised him in his youth he was still, at this date, rather thin than fat. Either the dieting with which the attack was treated or the incapacity for taking exercise which weakness induced for several months afterwards added several stones to his weight,—and the increase continued as he grew older.

He submitted obediently enough to all precautions that did not involve interference with his work, and to avoid any risk of chill remained at Hatfield until the end of February. Even when he moved to London he was kept a close prisoner to the house, and it was in Arlington Street, therefore, that the Cabinet met on the 6th of March for a crucial decision. Public affairs were for the moment singularly peaceful. European diplomacy was composing itself to rest after three years' agitation over the Eastern question, and a pause had at last come in the series of crises which in Egypt, South Africa and Afghanistan had marked the history of the last eighteen months. The public reasons which made the moment favourable for a general election were fortified by party arguments. Recent by-elections had shown a succession of victories for the Government, agents' reports were sanguine, and it was with a great confidence in the issue that the Cabinet resolved on an immediate dissolution.

The decision enabled Lord Salisbury to comply with his doctor's advice to escape as soon as possible from the English spring for convalescence in a warmer climate.

To Lord Beaconsfield, March 15, 1880.

"My doctor—Jenner—insists that I must go to Biarritz to get strong. As I am not likely to be wanted immediately after the dissolution, I propose to start on Monday or Tuesday next. What official work there is I can easily get through there, but, till the English constituencies have spoken, Europe will do very little."

He left England on the 22nd, and it was at Biarritz that the news of the unexpected and crushing defeat of the Government reached him in a rain of telegrams,—each intensifying the gloom left by those that had preceded it. He felt its depressing influence to the utmost, and it was not made lighter by his unhesitating acceptance of the fact that it was upon the action of his own department that the verdict had been primarily delivered. His curiously candid acquiescence in the conclusion come to has already been noted. Within the limits of their knowledge the electors had judged as he was conscious that he himself would have judged under similar restrictions. They disliked sensationalism in policy and so did he;—the sense of sympathetic comprehension with the bulk of his fellow-countrymen, which he always instinctively asserted, was never more notably displayed than at this moment when the difference between them seemed most absolute. But such considerations did not lessen the disaster. Far-reaching policies whose gradual realisation had occupied every waking thought,—schemes for the future of which only the foundations had as yet been laid, were ruined at one blow by the decision of men who knew nothing and could know nothing of what they were doing,—whose action operated with the intolerable brutality of some inorganic force. Under

such conditions, he gloomily declared, no foreign policy worthy of the name could be possible. Under democratic control England must abandon all idea of influence upon the world's affairs; her statesmen must henceforth be content with a hand-to-mouth diplomacy which attempted no provision for the eventualities of the future.

Not a long time was to pass before he was to see—and to profit by—the falsification of these prophecies. The intrusion upon the stern realities of international politics of the exaggerations and insincerities of party conflict brought with it an immediate nemesis. After the failure and disaster of the five years that followed, the common sense of Englishmen saw to it that never again should such destruction become operative. Democracy solved the problem of its own control by withdrawing from all intermediate interference with the statesmen to whom it entrusted its foreign relations. A tradition of national policy was established independent of party changes. That it should have replaced so rapidly and so unassailably the frenzied agitations of the later 'seventies is a remarkable fact in history. It could hardly have come about without the direct assistance of personalities. Lord Rosebery and the group of Liberals who supported him first gave articulate expression to the country's tacit resolve. But it was under the influence of Lord Salisbury's prolonged direction of affairs that the tradition attained strength and permanence. It may be contended that that result was at least in part due to the fidelity with which, both consciously and intuitively, he interpreted in his policy the real spirit of his fellow-countrymen as distinct from its misrepresentation on either side by dreamers or scaremongers.

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